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ABSTRACT

This guide has three sections dealing with information of use to persons involved in teaching English as a second language (ESL) to Cubans. First, it provides information on the current Cuban educational system and the level of literacy found among Cuban adults in Cuba. Secondly, it gives a brief overview of the Spanish spoken in Cuba with special attention to its pronunciation and spelling. Finally, it presents teaching materials that deal with the particular pronunciation problems Cuban students might have in learning English. In this final section, the major points of difference between English and Cuban Spanish pronunciation are presented in chart form and 33 pronunciation lessons are outlined. The lessons consist of minimal pairs, minimal sentences, practice sentences, and notes. A detailed development of the first lesson is given to illustrate how the lessons can be presented to a class. (AMH)

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Refugee Education Guide
General Information Series #25

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Teaching English to Cubans

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TEACHING ENGLISH TO CUBAN ENTRANTS

Introduction

We have had three purposes in mind in writing this Guide. First, we want to provide information on the current Cuban educational system and the level of literacy found among Cuban adults in Cuba. Next, we would like to give a brief overview of the Spanish spoken in Cuba--in particular, its pronunciation and spelling. Finally, we want to provide teaching materials which deal with the particular pronunciation problems your Cuban students might have in learning English. We believe that such information will be of use in making both the learning and teaching of English as a Second Language to Cubans more efficient and enjoyable.

Introduction

Objectives

Education and Literacy in Cuba

The educational system in Cuba has undergone radical changes during the last twenty years. Prior to the Castro regime, Cuba had already achieved one of the highest levels of adult literacy in Latin America. As a result of massive literacy campaigns, the current regime in Cuba claims near-universal literacy among its adult population. Although it is not clear just what this claim means in practical terms, one can expect most Cuban adult entrants to have acquired a certain level of proficiency in basic literacy in Spanish. However, it is very likely that there are significant numbers of Cuban entrants who are familiar with the rudiments of literacy in Spanish (basic decoding skills) but are not able to read with comprehension a wide variety of written materials such as newspapers, magazines, etc. This will often be the case with those individuals who have less than a basic primary education (six years or less of schooling in Cuba). As late as 1972, the non-completion rates for students in primary schools in Cuba was approximately 30%. However, there have been adult education campaigns to raise the education level of the adult population. Currently, the Cuban government has as one of its major goals for adult education the attainment of the equivalent of a

Educational System

Adult Literacy

Adult Education

Literacy Levels

sixth-grade education for all adults in Cuba. This goal was supposed to have been met by 1980. Campaigns of this type are a tacit recognition that not all adults in Cuba have had the equivalent of a sixth-grade education. This strongly suggests that you can expect many of your Cuban students to have difficulties in reading Spanish, and it would be wise to try to determine how well your students can read Spanish in order to anticipate problems in teaching them to read English. If you do not speak Spanish, you may have to rely on the assistance of someone who does in order to determine how well your students read in Spanish.

Cuban Education

The education system today in Cuba is a modification (radical in many ways) of the type of system found throughout Latin America. This system was introduced into Latin America during the 18th century and is based on the French educational system. Education consists of three basic components: primary (six years), basic secondary (three to five years), followed by three to five years of pre-university or technical studies. There is an extensive system of day-care centers (circulos infantiles) where parents are encouraged to leave their children while they are at work. Primary school is mandatory for all children, although the high drop-out rate has been a serious problem. Currently, attendance is not obligatory past primary school (sixth grade). In 1972, while 100% of all children at age 8 attended primary school, only 40% of all children at age 16 were enrolled in pre-university or technical institutes. The government has been considering making attendance at the secondary level (grades 7-10) obligatory for all children. It should be pointed out that the current Cuban regime is very proud of its education achievements. By comparison to other Latin American countries, the levels of education achieved so far in Cuba appear impressive.

Attendance Rates

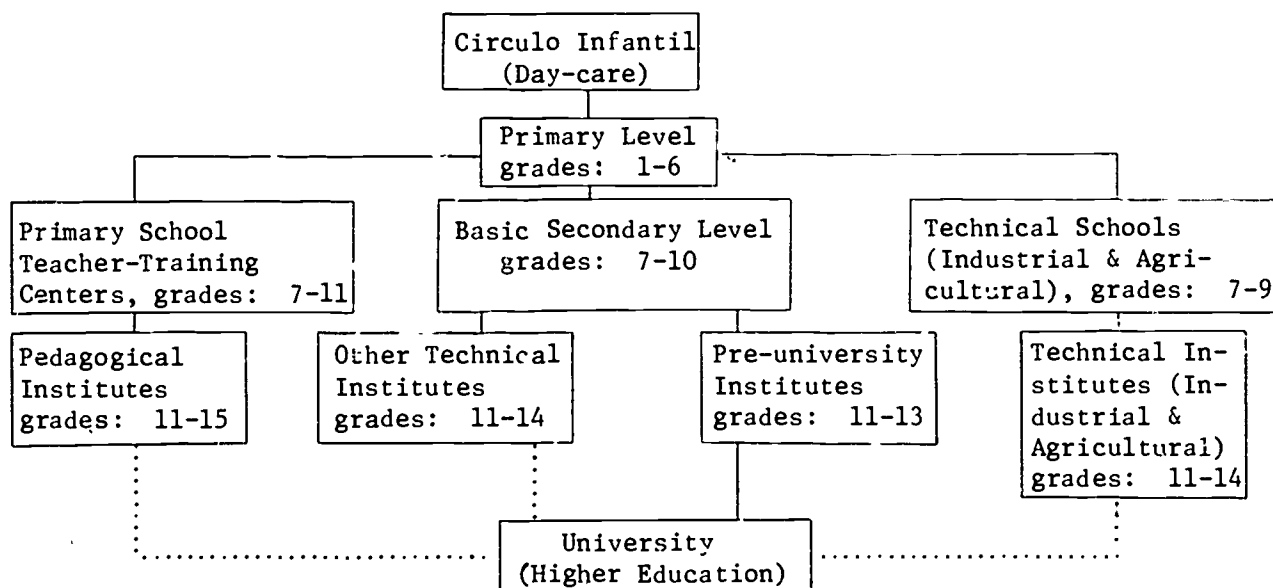
Educational Structure

The Cuban educational system is vertically structured, with all direction coming from a central Ministry of Education. There are no private schools currently operating--all schooling is controlled by the State. The curriculum is uniform throughout the island. One of the primary goals of the Cuban educational system is to bring about popular acceptance of social changes already made in principle.

This means that political indoctrination plays a very important role at all levels of the Cuban educational system. A large amount of instructional time is devoted to political concerns. This makes it very difficult to give American educational equivalencies to Cuban educational experience. In general, primary schooling is roughly equivalent to American grades 1-6; basic secondary schooling is generally equated to American junior high school; pre-university and technical institute experience is broadly equivalent to American senior high school and even, in certain cases, to junior (community) college.

Educational
Equivalence

CUBAN EDUCATION SYSTEM



The content areas typically found at the primary and basic secondary levels are as follows:

Subject Content

A. Primary

Primary Level

6½ hours of daily instruction:
basic literacy skills in Spanish
basic computational skills
basic composition
ideological orientation

B. Basic Secondary

Secondary Level

26 hours weekly of instruction in 9 or 10 subject areas;
there are no elective subjects allowed.

Grade 7: math, physics, biology, geography, history, Spanish,
English, technical-industrial training. physical education

Grade 8: above plus chemistry
Grade 9: same as above
Grade 10: same as above, but geography is dropped

High School Level

C. Pre-university Institute

The stress is on scientific and technical content. In many respects, the curriculum is similar to that of a junior (community) college in the U.S., except that the humanities are not stressed. Considerable amounts of time are given over to ideological concerns.

D. Technical Schools

These are equivalent to vocational programs. The purpose of these schools is to produce skilled workers in two or three years. Linguistic and computational skills are stressed. The curriculum contains considerable amounts of ideological orientation.

English Instruction

We should note that in the basic secondary schools, a certain amount of instruction is devoted to English. (No information currently exists on the effectiveness of such instruction.)

Boarding Schools

One of the most radical characteristics of Cuban education practices is that at the primary level, the government is carrying out a massive expansion of boarding schools. It is one of the goals of the current regime to remove children from daily contact with their parents in order to break down the older social structure. At the basic secondary level, a work-study program is being carried out with the specific purpose of destroying all social barriers. To the degree that such goals are actually met, the output of such an educational system will be radically different, both politically and culturally, from pre-Castro Cubans. Such characteristics make it even more difficult to equate Cuban and American educational experiences.

Vocational Training

Depending on the age and educational experience of the adult Cuban entrant, one can expect at least basic literacy to have been achieved, with some vocational training very likely. However, it is quite possible that many of the Cuban entrants did not fare well in the current Cuban educational system, or only received a minimal exposure to it. Consequently, many of the Cuban entrants may not possess adequate mastery over the vocational skills they were trained in or the skills may not be transferable to the American situation.

(The information summarized above is taken from the Area Handbook for Cuba, 1976 edition. For further information, see the Bibliography.)

The Spanish Language Spoken in Cuba

The official and national language of Cuba is Spanish. All Cuban entrants can be expected to speak some variety of Cuban Spanish. Spanish-speakers refer to their language by the terms Castellano or Español. Castellano (or Castilian) refers to the language spoken in the province of Castile, and is one of several languages spoken in Spain. The form of Castellano (or Spanish) that developed in Cuba shares many characteristics with other forms of Spanish spoken in the Caribbean. The Spanish spoken in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico is fairly close to Cuban Spanish in many respects, although Cuban Spanish remains distinctive from these other forms of Caribbean Spanish.

Cuban Language
Situation

'Castilian'
Spanish

All languages are composed of varieties usually called 'dialects' by linguists. No one speaks the English (or Spanish) language--rather, one speaks one or more varieties or dialects of a language. Spanish is spoken by around 200,000,000 people on five continents. Consequently, differences between groups of Spanish-speakers can be expected, in much the same way that differences between groups of English-speakers have arisen (compare Australian, Irish, New York City, Texan, and Cockney forms of English). Cuba has developed several distinct dialects of Spanish. The Spanish spoken in Santiago (eastern Cuba) is distinct from that spoken in the city of Havana.

In addition to geographic variation, there is also social variation in all languages. Consider a native New York City cabdriver (of limited education) and a highly educated native New York City university professor. Both may speak English in such a way that they are both readily identifiable as New Yorkers, but their individual varieties of English will also differ. For example, the cabdriver might not pronounce the r in words such as heart, cart, and York; the university professor will probably pronounce these words with an r-sound most of the time, but will 'drop' the r-sound in certain social situations (informal). This type of variation is called sociolinguistic variation and tells us that geographic dialects are themselves composed of even more complex types of variation. A similar type of variation exists in Cuban Spanish. There is a type of pronunciation that is shared by many educated Latin

Social Variation

Standard
Pronunciation

Americans. This type of pronunciation (which is often heard on the radio and television) is acquired in a formal situation-- mostly in school. These Cubans are likely to have an s-sound in Hasta la vista ('So long.'), some of the time. Many uneducated Cubans would probably not pronounce the letter s.

Academic Spanish

Unlike the English-speaking world, the Spanish-speaking world has a body of scholars who prescribe rules of spelling, grammatical usage and definitions of words. This body is the Spanish Academy of Language. (Actually, there are many academies since each Spanish-speaking country has its own; the Academy in Spain takes the leading role, however.) Essentially, the Academy has defined

Standardization

how Spanish is to be written. Hence, there is a standardized spelling system that all Spanish-speakers are supposed to use. Also, grammatical usage and word-meanings are prescribed by the Academy. The Academy Dictionary is an 'official' dictionary that specifies which words can actually be used in writing Spanish (along with their prescribed meanings). All Spanish-speaking governments require that the language arts curriculum in primary and secondary schools reflect usage as specified by the Academy. Since the same set of norms are specified for all Spanish-speakers, there is a remarkable

Written Spanish

uniformity in formal, written Spanish throughout the Spanish-speaking world. Written, formal (academic) Spanish has a profound influence on the speech of all Spanish-speakers. It is this influence that accounts for much of the sociolinguistic variation found in all dialects of Spanish. The pronunciation of Spanish has not been prescribed by any of the academies. However, there are two major types of

Forms of Pronunciation

pronunciation that carry great prestige. One form is found in Spain and the other in Latin America. These types of pronunciation have been popularized by the radio, television and motion-picture industries. Latin American prestige pronunciation influences Cuban Spanish (as it does all other Spanish dialects in Latin America). It explains why educated Latin American Spanish-speakers do not all share the same type of pronunciation, so that there are noticeable differences even among the educated in respect to pronunciation.

How well a person can handle the formal, standardized (academic) form of Spanish, and how close this pronunciation comes to

either of the two prestigious pronunciations is an indication of how educated the person is. Revolutionary Cuban Spanish appears not to be an exception in this regard.

The Sounds of Cuban Spanish

In this section, we will discuss some of the characteristics of Spanish as generally found throughout Cuba. Keep in mind that ~~we are speaking of the sounds, not the letters of the Spanish alphabet.~~ Since both English and Spanish use the same alphabet, it is fairly natural to assume that both languages are pronounced the same way. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

Sounds of Spanish

In order to understand why your student is having problems with some of the sounds in English, we will have to discuss briefly the notion of the sound-group. Many sounds in English also occur in Spanish; for example, the sounds [m]* and [n] as in may and no. Some sounds in English do not occur in Cuban Spanish, such as the th-sound in thus and the sh-sound in sure. Sounds that occur in English but not in Spanish will be problem sounds for your students. Besides new sounds, there are sounds in English that occur in new positions, for example, the ch-sound of much occurs in Cuban Spanish, but never at the end of a word. These new positions will be problems for your students. One particular problem in learning English pronunciation will be that sounds in Spanish are not grouped the same way in English. For example, the sounds [b] and [v] contrast in English, but not in Spanish. In English we distinguish words with this contrast: beer and veer. In Spanish, the [b] and [v] sounds do not contrast, they form a sound-group. This means that a word like beso, 'kiss', is sometimes pronounced with a [b] sound initially, and at other times with a [v] sound. It is not necessary to go into the rules that account for this alternation in Spanish, but you should keep in mind that sounds within a sound-group will be heard as the same. That is, your student will have to learn to distinguish between [b] and [v] since this contrast is important in English. We will indicate a sound-group by putting a symbol within slashes (/ /).

Sound-groups

Sound contrasts

The following is an inventory of the basic sound-groups in Cuban Spanish. You should really notice that Spanish makes fewer contrasts than English--one of the reasons for your students having problems with

Inventory of Sound-groups

* We enclose symbols for sounds in square brackets to distinguish them from orthographic letters (which will be underlined).

English pronunciation.

Spanish Sound-Groups

/p	t	ch	k	/i	u
b	d	y	g		
f	s		h	e	o
m	n	n		a/	
	r	r			
l		w/			

English Sound-Groups

English has a far more complex sound system:

/p	t	ch	k	/iy	i	u	uw	
b	d	j	g	ey	e	ə	o	ow
f	θ	s	sh		æ	a	ɔ	
v	ð	z	zh					
m		n					ay	
		r					aw	
		l					oy/	
w		y						

(wh)/

While we will not discuss all of the possible characteristics and problems that pertain to Spanish and English phonologies, a list of references can be found in the appendix that fully describe these items.

Vowel Difference

Spanish has five vocalic sound-groups: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/. English has around 14 (or more, depending on how you analyze the vowels in English and on which dialect you might happen to speak). The Spanish sound-groups all have one major realization--there is little variation. English has considerable variation in the realization of its vocalic sound-groups. One further complication is that Spanish vowels are pronounced about the same whether the vowel is stressed (accented) or not. English vowels undergo considerable variation in relation to stress. Most English vowels are reduced to what is called 'schwa' [ə] when unstressed. This role of vowel weakening in English is a major difference between English and Spanish pronunciation.

Consonant Differences

Spanish voiceless stops (/p/, /t/, /k/) do not occur in word-final positions. This is an important limitation in that English /p/, /t/, and /k/ commonly occur in this position (ape, ate, ache). We should also point out that the Spanish voiceless stops lack aspiration (the puff of air that occurs after English voiceless

stops such as pea, tea, key). You will have to teach your students to make this puff of air.

Both English and Spanish have a similar set of sounds symbolized by /ch/. This is the sound you hear in the English word church or chico. Note that Spanish /ch/ does not occur at the end of words. English ch

The Spanish sound-groups symbolized by /b/, /d/ and /g/ are Voiced Stops a particular source of problems since these sound-groups include alternations between stops (sounds like [b], [d], and [g]) and fricatives (sounds like [v], [ð], and a sound that does not occur in English, [ɣ]). What this means is that the sound-group /b/ has both b-sounds and v-sounds; /d/ has both d-sounds and th-sounds (th as in then); Spanish /g/ also alternates between g and a sound not found in English--this latter sound-group will not be a major problem. Given that these sounds contrast in English, your students will have a particular problem learning first to distinguish the sounds, then in producing them. Note further, Spanish /b/, /d/, and /g/ do not occur at the end of words. This means that words such as cab and cap constitute a double problem. First, your students will not hear the consonant at the end of the word; second, your student will not distinguish between English [b] and [p] even when he first learns to recognize that there is a sound at the end of such words in English. Note that some Cubans pronounce /b/ as [w] before the vowels [o] and [u]: Cuba is pronounced as [kuwa]. This should be a relatively minor problem.

The Spanish sound-group represented by the symbol /y/ represents English y, j a set of sounds that range from English [j] to [zh] and [y]. This means that the sounds represented by the underlined letters in the following examples are all potential problems since they all will sound like the same sound to your students: leisure, jail, Yale, rouge.

Cuban Spanish [f], [s], and [h] are pronounced very much like English Fricatives English [f], [s], and [h]. However, Spanish [f] and [s] do not occur in the speech of many Cubans in syllable-final or word-final positions; after, stuff, lass and house. These sounds will be a problem for your students. Note that English has [sh] and [θ] (this sound is like the th in thick) do not occur in Cuban Spanish. Some Cuban Spanish-speakers pronounce the letter s as [h] in Spanish words like esto and mes; other speakers (sometimes the same speaker at different times) will not pronounce the letter s in such words (the same goes for the letters x

and z). This means that words such as last, lass, etc., are particular problems for such speakers, since they will tend to 'drop' the s or pronounce it as [h].

English Nasals

Many Cubans have, as their only nasal sound, an ng-sound before a consonant or at the end of a word:

enfermo
[ng]

pan
[ng]

en America
[ng]

This means that the distinction in the final sounds of English sum, son and sung will be a particular problem since such speakers will pronounce all of these words as if they were all written sung. This syllable-final ng-sound is one of the dominant features of Cuban Spanish.

English l and r

Some Cuban-Spanish speakers will not distinguish between l and r before a consonant or at the end of words. That is, what is written in Spanish as Marta and malta, or mar and mal will be pronounced as [malta] and [mal]. Thus, if you pronounce word-final English [r] and [l], you can expect some of your students to find these a problem. Some dialects of Cuban Spanish drop the r-sound when this sound occurs before a consonant or at the end of a word. These students will also have a problem learning English word-final [r] and [l].

Teaching Pronunciation

How to Teach English Pronunciation

New Sounds

It may appear to you that there are many differences between English and Spanish pronunciation. There are, but the two languages are rather similar in many respects. In general, there are few sounds that occur in English that do not also occur in Spanish (examples of new sounds for Cuban Spanish-speakers would be the th in thick, sh in shake, the i in pin and the a in pan). However, the main problem for a Spanish-speaker learning English is the new distribution and positions for sounds that also occur in Spanish. For example, the k-sound in thick is similar to sounds that occur in Spanish, but in Spanish such a sound would never occur at the end of a word. Another major problem for the student of English is the dynamic stress of English that tends to reduce unstressed vowels to the neutral vowel 'schwa' (i.e., the final vowel of Rosa or Georgia). The stress position in English can vary depending on the type of word involved: telegraph, telegraphic, telegraphy. As the

stress is shifted, the vowel concerned may sound quite different (notice how the graph part of the three words listed above is pronounced). In Spanish, there is no change in the pronunciation of the vowel, whether stressed or unstressed: telégrafo, telegráfico, telegrafía. The graf part of these three words is pronounced with the same vowel: [a]. It is this alternation in the quality of the vowel due to stress patterns that makes English sound so 'chaotic' to the Spanish-speaker.

If you are a native English-speaker, however, you have several factors working in your favor when you teach English to Cuban entrants.

Advantages

The primary advantage that you have is that your students are apt to be highly motivated to learn English. Not only is the language necessary to them for day-to-day existence, but they are also pressured by the need to communicate, and communicating means speaking English--at least outside the home. This motivation will keep the students going long after they--and you--have become exhausted on other grounds, and in rare cases will be sufficient for them to learn English without any formal training at all.

Motivation

A second advantage is that the students have access to accurately-pronounced English. (We are not talking here of 'correct' in the grammar-book sense; we are saying that all native speakers of English pronounce English vowels correctly.) Every time Cubans turn on the radio or television at home, or buy shoes, or get on a bus, they are often bombarded with correct examples of the English language.

Speech-Model

Another advantage you have, if you only speak English, is that you are, by definition, a native speaker for your students to imitate.

Native-Speaker

Whether you speak Florida English or California English or New York City English, you are a native speaker of English; if your students wind up speaking exactly like you do, they will sound like a native speaker, too--which is the ultimate goal for any second-language learner.

One further advantage you have is that Spanish and English share a considerable body of vocabulary. Even if you don't speak one word of Spanish, you can easily guess what the following Spanish words mean: persona, crisis, plural, hotel, nacion, idioma, importante, eleccion. With just a bit of effort, the following Spanish words can easily be

Shared Vocabulary

guessed: leagua, extranjero, universidad, colegio, escuela, estudiante (tongue, stranger, university, college, school, student). Then, of course, English has borrowed many words from Spanish: patio, enchilada, grandee, bolero, rumba, cigar, hammock, hurricane, tornado. Spanish, likewise, has borrowed many words from English: jet, football, soccer, baseball, home-run, strike, pie (these are spelled in English orthography; as Spanish words they might be spelled: yet, futbol, soquer, beisbol, jonron, estraique, pay).

Speaking Spanish

Even not being able to speak Spanish is a factor which can operate in your favor. You will find that very, very quickly--within the first fifteen minutes of your first class with your students--you can establish by gestures enough vocabulary (listen, repeat, all together, and so on) to carry you through until your students can understand more complicated instructions in English. On the other hand, your students have to use English with you--they can't slip back in Spanish when the going gets rough--and this serves as additional motivation for them to learn. With so many factors working to your advantage, teaching pronunciation is by no means the formidable job it might appear to be.

Summary

The following chart summarizes in tabular form the major points of difference between English and Cuban Spanish pronunciation that may result in problems for the Spanish-speaker learning English. As was mentioned earlier, Cubans do not all pronounce Spanish the same in all social contexts. Thus, a considerable amount of phonological variation may be expected. The chart, however, simply predicts the most likely problems for most Spanish-speakers from Cuba. The pronunciation lessons are based on the pronunciation problems summarized on the chart. These pronunciation problems are not the only predictable difficulties in pronunciation, but they are the ones we think justify spending time teaching, since language consists of more than just pronunciation.

Pronunciation Problems for Cubans Learning English

<u>Sound</u>	<u>Position in word:</u>	<u>Why a problem:</u>	<u>Will be confused with:</u>
p 'pin'	before a stressed vowel	will be pronounced without aspiration	will sound like a <u>b</u> to an English-speaker
'tip'	final	does not occur finally in Spanish	<u>b</u> or <u>f</u> , or will be absent entirely
t 'tin'	before a stressed vowel	will be pronounced without aspiration	will sound like a <u>d</u> to an English-speaker
'at last'	before a consonant	frequently pronounced as a glottal stop in English--a sound non-existent in Spanish	will be absent or confused with <u>k</u>
'late'	final	does not occur finally in Spanish; also, much variation in pronunciation of this segment in English	<u>d</u> or will be absent entirely
k 'kite'	before a stressed vowel	will be pronounced without aspiration	will sound like a <u>g</u> (as in ghost) to an English-speaker
'lake'	final	does not occur finally in Spanish	<u>g</u> (as in lag), or an 'h' sound, or will be absent entirely
b 'back'	before a vowel	there is an alternation in Spanish between [b] and a sound similar to [v]	<u>v</u> 'van'
'lab'	final	does not occur finally in Spanish	<u>ɔ</u> 'lap', <u>v</u> 'love' or may be absent entirely
d 'day'	before a vowel	varies between [d] and [ð] in Spanish	<u>th</u> as in 'they'
'mad'	final	generally absent in Cuban Spanish	<u>th</u> 'bathe' or may be absent entirely
g 'tag'	final	does not occur in Spanish	<u>k</u> as in 'back'; or even as an 'h' sound; may be absent entirely

<u>Sound:</u>	<u>Position in word:</u>	<u>Why a problem:</u>	<u>Will be confused with:</u>
<u>f</u> 'l <u>if</u> e'	final	does not occur in Spanish	<u>p</u> as in 'lap'; may be entirely absent
'church <u>h</u> '	at end of a word	does not occur in Spanish at end of a word; in all cases, no distinction between <u>sh</u> and <u>ch</u> occurs in Cuban Spanish	sh 'lash';
<u>j</u> 'j <u>e</u> t'	before a vowel	this sound occurs in Cuban Spanish as one pronunciation variant of Spanish /y/	<u>y</u> 'yet'
'edge'	at end of a word	does not occur in Spanish	'ch' 'etch <u>h</u> ' or ' <u>sh</u> ' 'sash'
<u>m</u> 'ya <u>m</u> '	at end of a word	does not occur in Spanish	' <u>ng</u> ' 'sing' or may assimilate to point of articulation of following consonant
<u>n</u> 'ca <u>n</u> '	at end of a word	does not usually occur in Cuban Spanish	' <u>ng</u> ' 'sing' or may assimilate to point of articulation of following consonant
<u>ng</u> 'si <u>ng</u> '	at end of a word	nasals assimilate to point of articulation of following consonant	'sing the song' [n d]
<u>l</u> 'bi <u>ll</u> '	at end of a word	Spanish /l/ is always pronounced with 'bright' "l"; English has a 'dark' "l" at end of a syllable	dark 'l' will be interpreted as a back vowel: tall [to] bill [bio]
<u>r</u> 'bea <u>r</u> '	at end of a word/syllable	Cuban [r] is either a trill or a flap at the end of a syllable; English [r] is a centering glide which is deleted in many American dialects. In some Cuban dialects, either /l/ and /r/ at the end of a syllable are not distinguished (both pronounced as [l]), or /r/ is dropped and following consonant is doubled	syllable-final English /r/ will often be interpreted as pronounced as a front glide /y/; depending on how instructor pronounces syllable-final r in English, may not be a problem; if instructor deletes syllable-final r, there may be a big problem. English r will be a problem for speakers who do not distinguish /r/ and /l/ or who drop the /r/ in this position

<u>Sound:</u>	<u>Position in Word</u>	<u>Why a problem:</u>	<u>Will be confused with:</u>
y 'yet'	at beginning of a word	Spanish /y/ is often pronounced as [j] in word-initial position; [j] and [y] sound alternate	j 'jet'
v 'very'	initial	not distinguished from [b]	b; sometimes sounds like v
'live'	final	does not occur in Spanish	will probably be absent
th 'thick'	everywhere	does not occur in Cuban Spanish	t or s will occur as substitutes; may be absent in final position
'the'	initial	not differentiated from [d]; will alternate with d	d 'day'
'three'	before /r/	does not occur in Spanish	t as in tree
'breathe'	final	generally does not occur in Cuban Spanish in final word position	will be absent entirely
s 'loss'	word-final	may occur in formal pronunciations; may be pronounced as [h]; usually does not occur at all	will probably be absent in this position
'last'	before a consonant	may occur in formal pronunciation; may be pronounced as [h]; usually does not occur at all	will probably be absent in this position
z 'zoo'	everywhere	generally does not occur phonetically in Cuban Spanish	s before a vowel; absent otherwise
sh 'shoe'	before a vowel	this sound does not occur in Cuban Spanish	ch 'chew'
'mash'	before consonant or at	this sound does not occur in Cuban Spanish	ch 'match' or s 'mass' or may be absent

<u>Sound:</u>	<u>Position in word:</u>	<u>Why a problem:</u>	<u>Will be confused with:</u>
<u>zh</u> 'pleasure'	before a vowel	this sound is not common in Cuban Spanish	<u>j</u> 'jam' of <u>y</u> 'yet'
<u>zh</u> 'rouge'	at end of a word	this sound is absent in this position in Spanish	<u>ch</u> 'match' of <u>j</u> 'edge' or even <u>y</u> 'boy'
<u>ch</u> 'chair'	before a vowel	this sound may alternate with <u>sh</u> in the style of some speakers	<u>sh</u> 'share'
<u>w</u> 'wet'	initial	Spanish /w/ has a pronunciation similar to gw in initial positions generally	<u>gw</u> 'Gwen'
<u>s</u> in initial clusters like <u>spin</u> , <u>skin</u> , <u>stick</u> , <u>skip</u> , <u>smile</u> , etc.	initial	initial clusters starting with /s/ do not occur in Spanish	a word such as <u>spin</u> will have a vowel similar to English /e/ attached to the cluster; the <u>s</u> will probably not be pronounced so that <u>spin</u> is apt to be pronounced as eping, which is similar for other clusters stick: [etik] slip: [elip] skate: [ekeyt] snake: [eneyk] smell: [emel]
all final clusters	final	initial clusters starting with /s/ do not occur in Spanish	a final cluster will most likely be simplified to one sound; the resulting consonant will be treated like other consonants of similar type (this is a very complex problem--just keep in mind that final clusters are a serious problem for Spanish-speakers): books [bug] or [bu] tasks [tæs] or [tæ] camp [kæ] camps [kæns] or [kæŋg] sometimes, a final cluster is broken up by adding a final vowel (similar to English /e/) books [hukse] or [buhse] bent [bente]

<u>Sound:</u>	<u>Position in word:</u>	<u>Why a problem:</u>	<u>Will be confused with:</u>
[i] 'p <u>i</u> n'	all	this sound does not occur in Spanish; nearest sound is either [i] or [e]	<u>ee</u> as in <u>meet</u> ; sometimes <u>e</u> as in <u>pen</u>
[æ] 'p <u>a</u> n'	all	this sound does not occur in Spanish; nearest sound is [e] or [a]	<u>e</u> as in <u>pen</u> ; sometimes as <u>o</u> in <u>hot</u>
[ə] 'b <u>u</u> t'	all	this sound does not occur in Spanish; nearest sound is [u] or [o]	<u>a</u> as in <u>hot</u> ; often as a sound similar to <u>o</u> as in <u>vote</u>
[u] 'p <u>u</u> t'	all	this sound does not occur in Spanish; nearest sound is [a] or [o]	<u>o</u> as in <u>vote</u> ; <u>oo</u> as in <u>moot</u>
[ɔ] 'c <u>a</u> use'	all	this sound does not occur in Spanish; nearest sound is [a] or [o]	<u>o</u> as in <u>boat</u> ; <u>o</u> as in <u>hot</u>
[ə] (weak vowel)	all	unstressed vowels are weakened to schwa (the neutral vowel) in English; Spanish pronounces weak vowels as full vowels--generally substituting a vowel similar to [a] or [o]	<u>o</u> as in <u>hot</u> or <u>above</u> , etc.
Wh-word question	Questions which begin with 'who', 'which', 'how', etc.	intonation pattern may rise instead of falling as in English	rising intonation

English Pronunciation Lessons for Cuban Spanish-Speakers

Teaching the Lessons

Teaching Pronunciation

The following pronunciation lessons deal with the particular problems that Spanish-speakers--specifically those from Cuba--are likely to have in learning to pronounce English. These lessons will provide you with words and sentences which you can use to teach Cuban Spanish-speakers to distinguish between sounds they are likely to have trouble with, and also to produce the problem sounds so they can be understood by English-speakers. The lessons for the most part consist of minimal pairs, minimal sentences, practice sentences, and notes.

Minimal Pairs

Minimal pairs are pairs of words which differ in only one sound, like bat-vat, meet-mitt, chair-share, and so on. Keep in mind that we are talking about sounds, not spelling: coast and ghost are a minimal pair, despite the fact that their spellings differ in more than one way. (Their phonetic representations [kowst] and [gowst] indicate more clearly that they are minimal pairs.) Minimal pairs are used in pronunciation work to focus students' attention on the fact that a change from one sound to another results in the production of words with different meanings. On being shown that bat and vat are different words, for example, your Spanish-speaking student's attention is focused on the fact that in English the difference between [v] and [b] is important.

Minimal Sentences

Minimal sentences are just like minimal pairs, except that the words are put into sentences, e.g., That's a bat; That's a vat. The difference between minimal sentences should be just that difference you are focusing on. In the sample given, the minimal difference is that between [b] and [v].

Practice Sentences

The practice sentences given in the lesson have been selected to provide your students with multiple occurrences of the sounds in the lesson. We have tried to keep the sentences simple, and in basic tenses, so that they can be used in beginning ESL situations. You will undoubtedly want to make up practice sentences of your own, using sentence structures and vocabulary your students already have. The practice sentences will be to your Spanish-speaking students what tongue-twisters are to English-speakers, and should be approached

in a light-hearted fashion. Be patient! It takes a while to learn to perceive the differences in a second language. Your students will learn soon enough. Remember, even newborn babies take about two years before they begin to speak English.

The Notes to the Teacher explain why the sounds in the lesson are problems for the Cuban Spanish-speaker, and give suggestions and strategies for dealing with them. In general, we take the approach that consistent use of a sound that English-speakers will understand appropriately is as good, for purposes of communication, as perfect reproduction of the sound English-speakers use. We suggest, for example, that you not waste time trying to teach your students to say English [r], as in red, with the tip of the tongue curled back instead of allowing them to pronounce the [r] with a bit of a trill. Such a pronunciation will be well understood by English-speakers. Of course, a trilled 'r' will be a sign of a foreign accent in English. You will have to weigh the importance of eradicating a trilled 'r' which is readily understood by English-speakers against trying to get your students to make a difference that will contribute to confusion if not made consistently, say the difference between final [m] and [n] as in some vs. sun. You should concentrate on those possible errors that will lead to confusion either in interpreting what English-speakers say or interpreting what your students are saying.

The minimal pairs and sentences, and practices sentences, are to be used first to teach your students to hear the difference between the sounds in question, and then to pronounce them so they can be understood by English-speakers. After each lesson is taught, spot-correction will help to establish the understandable pronunciation as a habit.

To show you better how to use the lesson, we will work through Lesson One in detail in the following pages.

Notes

Consistency

Practical Goals

Significant Errors

Teaching the Lessons

Spanish-speakers will have problems with sounds which occur in English but not in Spanish, or which pattern differently in Spanish and English. These problem sounds can be tackled one by one, first teaching the students to distinguish aurally the sounds they are likely to confuse; then teaching them to pronounce the problem sounds so they can be understood; and finally, helping them to control the understandable

Teaching the Lessons

Contrastive Analysis

Teaching b- and v-sounds

pronunciation consistently.

For example, the first lesson deals with the sounds [b] as in boat and [v] as in vote. As the notes to the teacher explain, there is no contrast between [b] and [v] in Spanish. This means that the Spanish word vote (which happens to mean 'vote') can be pronounced with an initial [b] sound or [v] sound. Whichever way the word is pronounced, it still means 'vote'. Now, there are rules that the native Spanish-speaker follows that require him to pronounce a v-sound or a b-sound in certain contexts. These rules are somewhat complex and they've been reviewed earlier, but suffice it to say that b-sounds and v-sounds do not contrast in Spanish. Of course, they do contrast in English, which is the reason the Spanish-speaker must learn to make the contrast. (In English, it makes a great difference whether you are speaking of a bale or veil.) Further, the note to the teacher points out that the v-sound is made by bringing the lower lip close to the upper teeth. In this particular case, teaching the student how to make an English v-sound correctly will assist him/her in learning to perceive and produce the contrast. However, the Spanish [v] sound will be identifiable as a [v] sound to an English-speaker; thus, spend some time in teaching your student how to produce an English [v] sound, but not at the expense of teaching him more important sound contrasts.

Spanish v-sound

Perception

Teaching Sound Discriminations

1. The first step in teaching [b] and [v] is to get your student to hear the difference between [b] and [v], and to realize that the difference in sound is what makes words different. This can be done in a number of ways. One way is to make up a set of pictures which show, say, a bat, and a vat. Hold up the picture of the bat and say bat; then hold up the picture of the vat and say vat. Alternatively, if you have a Spanish-speaking bilingual aide, or if one of your students has a wide vocabulary, you can get the minimal pairs translated: write bat and vat on the board, and have your aide or student write the Spanish equivalents next to them.

Aural Distinctions

2. Once you have established that the meanings of words change along with an alternation between [b] and [v], you should teach the students to hear the differences between [b] and [v]. (YOU'RE NOT GETTING THEM TO PRONOUNCE THE PAIRS YET.) One way of doing this is

to list the minimal pairs on the blackboard, e.g.:

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
veil	bale
van	ban
very	berry, etc.

Then, pointing to the veil/bale row, say one or the other of the two words, and ask your students to tell you if what you've said is a '1' or a '2' word. (Or you could write the b words on one side of the board and the v words on the other, and have your students point to the proper column. If you have pictures, it would be appropriate to point to those.)

Another technique for teaching students to distinguish problem sounds is to say pairs of words, and ask the student to tell whether the words are "same" or "different". Say, for example, "van - van"; the student should respond to the words as "same"; and if you say "ban - van", the response should be "different". Carry on at random, until the students respond instantly and correctly. same/different

3. When the students easily distinguish the problem sound in words, go through the same procedure with the minimal sentences. This step is quite important, as outside of class the problem sounds will be buried in sentences or phrases.

Production

1. When your students clearly hear the difference between [b] and [v], you can go on to teach them how to pronounce the [v]. Most ESL teachers simply ask the students to repeat the words in the minimal pairs one at a time, first with the students repeating in chorus, then individually (this assumes that you have two or more students). What the student does with the difficult sounds, essentially, is to try random pronunciations until he hits on one that sounds good to his teacher. When your students can manage the pronunciation of the problem sounds, you can reverse the activities mentioned above. The students should repeat words for you to judge as same or different, etc. Keep in mind that you are teaching pronunciation, not vocabulary (at least during the execution of these pronunciation lessons). What is important about teaching the contrast between bat and vat is the contrast itself; these specific vocabulary items need not be learned by the student at the same time he is learning to make the teaching sound production
minimal pairs
teaching contrasts, not vocabulary

contrasts. Bat and vat are not particularly useful words to know; they are simply vehicles to teach a sound contrast. In teaching the b/v contrast, any two words that form a minimal pair can be used.

minimal sentence
drills

2. When your students are comfortable with the sounds in question, you can go on to drill the minimal sentences. We have listed some of the sentences in phrases, to remind you to start with smaller elements and build up to the whole sentence. Start with phrases from the end of the sentence, and work forward; this will keep your intonation more natural, e.g.:

Teacher:	veil
Students:	veil
Teacher:	cotton veil
Students:	cotton veil
Teacher:	buy a cotton veil
Students:	buy a cotton veil
Teacher:	Mary wants to buy a cotton veil
Students:	Mary wants to buy a cotton veil

If you have more than one student, you might want to begin all repetition exercises being repeated first by an individual student (in this way, the other students can profit from any corrections you might make), then having the entire group repeat.

practice sentence

3. The next step is the practice sentence, which, as we mentioned before, should be approached light-heartedly, like tongue-twisters. (Skip any sentences that require too much explanation of meaning and vocabulary, and make up sentences of your own to supplement the ones we have given.) Drill the sentences the same way as the minimal sentences.

4. As a final step, you should go over any vocabulary you have covered which has [b] or [v] in it; list the words on the board, point out the occurrences of the sounds in question, and have your students pronounce them several times.

Reminding

correcting
errors

After you have taught the lesson on [b] and [v], and are sure that your students can both hear and produce the two sounds, you can correct your students' errors on [b] and [v] when these come up in class. Even when your students can pronounce [b] distinctively from [v], they may forget to make the contrast as they concentrate

on other aspects of English; once they have been through the pronunciation lessons on [b] and [v], a quick reminder will help them re-establish the correct pronunciation.

Quick Reminder

General Hints

General Hints

Don't try to correct all the errors your students are apt to make. Making errors is part of the way a second-language learner goes about learning a second language. Keep in mind the proverb, "one learns by making mistakes." However, do try and correct the particular point you are trying to teach. If you are trying to teach the pronunciation of [b] and [v], then try to avoid correcting the omission of the [s] sound when your students try to make the distinction between best and vest. Correct what is at issue; don't get side-tracked. Over-correction will frustrate both your students, and ultimately you.

Student Errors

As you are teaching pronunciation, you should try at all times to keep your own pronunciation natural, and speak at the same pace you normally do. Slowing down your pronunciation, or pronouncing syllables more distinctly than you ordinarily do, hinders rather than helps your students; they have to deal with normally-spoken English outside the classroom. If your students comment that "We understand everything in class, but have trouble outside," you should consider carefully whether they are hearing normally paced and pronounced English from you.

Use natural pronunciation

In some of the lessons, we have indicated that you should probably not insist on perfection in your students' production of a particular sound. Your overall goal should be to make their pronunciation easily understandable by native English-speakers, and to see to it that they understand normally spoken English. Some sounds--notably the English r--are not worth the time it takes to teach perfect pronunciation; if your students can hear English r correctly, and consistently produce something that is an understandable substitute for the r, there is probably no need to spend the necessary time getting them to produce a perfect r sound.

Understandable pronunciation

Keep in mind that teaching pronunciation is not the same thing as teaching spelling. Students should not be expected to learn the spelling of words until they have learned what the words mean. The

Pronunciation and Spelling

Sound Contrasts

purpose of a pronunciation lesson is to teach a sound contrast of some sort. The words used in such lessons are not meant to be learned as vocabulary items. If you look at lesson one, you will quickly discover that it contains such items as bale, lubber, veil, etc. These are not particularly useful words to learn per se.

Using words unknown to the student

There is disagreement among ESL specialists on the advisability of asking students to repeat words and sentences if the students do not know the meanings. Some people feel that using language in such a manner is unnatural--we usually don't use language without meaning. However, an adult learning a second language is engaging in an unusual activity. The task of learning language is accomplished in early childhood, not adulthood. Thus, the learning of a second language in adulthood is tinged with artificiality. Learning to make sound contrasts by using words whose meaning is not to be learned is simply one more artificial activity that we must contend with if we want to learn a second language as quickly as possible--certainly the Cuban entrant does not have 4 to 6 years to learn English in as 'natural' a way as possible. In fact, you will probably find that your students will be relieved not to have to bother with meanings when they are trying to focus on pronunciation. Likewise, they should not have to bother with meanings when they are learning spelling--they should have learned the meanings prior to being introduced to the spelling.

Focus on Pronunciation

Dialect Variation

One final point. Although your pronunciation of English is an appropriate model for your students to follow, they are apt to run into people who speak a different form of English. There are significant differences between individuals who speak the same geographic dialect. Your students will have to be exposed to other forms of spoken English than just yours. This exposure, however, should be controlled and should serve as a learning experience. Ways that this might be done include:

Exposure to other English dialects

- tape-record a commercial off the radio (you might want to teach the vocabulary contained therein);
- tape-record an item in the evening news;
- have a friend tape one of your lessons;
- invite a friend in to read a passage containing familiar language to your students; invite several friends who might have distinct differences in their speech from yours;

- teach your students a popular song, then bring in a recording of the song and have your students compare your pronunciation with the singer's.

The object of all these activities is simply to allow exposure to different forms of spoken English. This will help bridge the gap between the classroom and the 'outside world.'

Some Structural Differences between English and Spanish

Structural Differences

By and large, Spanish and English have similar rules for forming sentences. However, there are some major differences that will be the source of problems for your students. Some of these problems are described below.

1. Negative sentences in Spanish are formed by placing the word no before the verb.

Negation

Yo quiero ir.
"I want to go."

Yo no quiero ir.
"I don't want to go."

Mi amigo es cubano.
"My friend is Cuban."

Mi amigo no es cubano.
"My friend isn't Cuban."

Puedo hablar inglés.
"I can speak English."

No puedo hablar inglés.
"I can't speak English."

English has a complicated way of negating sentences. Sometimes you place the particle not (n't) after the verb (such as with be, may), other times not is placed before the verb, and the auxiliary do is attached to it (don't). Well-prepared ESL materials will introduce the negative particle not in a systematic way. Because of the differences between Spanish and English in regard to negation, you can expect this to be a major learning problem for your students.

2. Spanish can form a question by either switching around the subject and the verb, or by simply using a rising intonation pattern:

Question-Formation

Juan habla inglés.
"John speaks English."

¿Habla Juan inglés? ¿Juan habla inglés?
"Does John speak English?"

Es grande.
"It is big."

¿Es grande?
"Is it big?"

As you can see, English is complicated (as seen from the Spanish point of view). You will have to spend time practicing both negative and question formation--these patterns will be very difficult for your students to master. Well-prepared ESL materials will be of great assistance to you and your

students in learning question-formation.

Subject Pronouns

3. Spanish does not always require a subject pronoun--the end of the verb tells you who the subject is. The "empty" subject pronoun it (as in It's raining.) has no equivalent in Spanish. Spanish would simply not have any subject pronoun at all in equivalent cases:

Yo hablo inglés.
"I speak English."

Hablo inglés.
"I speak English."

Llueve.
"It is raining."

This means that your student will often simply drop the subject pronoun in English, and will require extensive practice to not do so.

English 'it'

4. The English pronoun it, either as subject of object, will be one of the more difficult things for your students to master. Part of the reason for this is that Spanish does not need to express the equivalent of it in subject position; while in object position, there are two pronouns in Spanish (lo, la), which correspond not only to it, but also to him and her:

Veo un libro.
Lo compré ayer.

"I see a book."
"I bought it yesterday."

Veo una revista.
La compré ayer.

"I see a magazine."
"I bought it yesterday."

Veo a Juan.
Lo vi ayer.

"I see John."
"I saw him yesterday."

Veo a María.
La vi ayer.

"I see Mary."
"I saw her yesterday."

Adding to the problem is the fact that in Spanish object pronouns occur before the verb, while in English they occur after the verb. You can expect the third person subject and object pronouns to be a difficult thing for your students to learn at first.

Articles

5. Spanish uses the definite article (el, la, los, las) in positions where English usually does not:

I study biology.
I like rice.

Estudio la biología.
Me gusta el arroz.

On the other hand, English sometimes uses the indefinite article (a/an) in places where Spanish has no article at all:

I am <u>a</u> doctor.	Soy médico.
I am <u>a</u> friend of his.	Soy amigo suyo.

These differences in article usage will result in errors of the following kinds:

- * I study the biology.
- * I like the rice. (rice in general)
- * I am doctor.
- * I am friend of his.

(Note that we use the asterisk to indicate an unacceptable sentence.)

You will have to point out those cases where Spanish and English appear not to follow the same rules of usage for the articles.

6. Spanish has several ways of indicating the future. One way that will prove a source of problems is the use of the simple present tense in Spanish to mark future events: Estudio la biología mañana. ("I study biology tomorrow.") Sometimes English uses the simple present tense to mark planned or scheduled events (which, by necessity, occur in the future): I study biology tomorrow. (This sentence means that I am scheduled to do so tomorrow.) While these distinctions might seem too refined, you will have to be alert to your students using the simple present tense in English when he should be using some form of the future tense (be plus -ing: I'm going; be plus going to plus verb: I'm going to go; or with the use of will: I'll go tomorrow). You should point out whatever form you feel is appropriate for any given occasion.

Future Tense

7. Both English and Spanish have an active vs. passive distinction:

John painted the house.
Juan pintó la casa.

The house was painted by John.
La casa fue pintada por Juan.

Passive
Structures

However, Spanish speakers rarely use the passive forms. The forms that substitute for the passive in Spanish are rather complicated to describe, but just keep in mind that passive constructions are a particular source of problems for your students learning English. This is particularly the case where English uses a passive construction without an expressed agent:

Spanish is spoken. (the agent--that is, the person doing the speaking--is not expressed)

Books are sold in bookstores. (no agent is expressed)

In sentences of this type, Spanish would rarely use the passive form; instead, it would employ a complex structure called the Romance Passive:

(true passive)	El español es hablado.
(Romance passive)	Se habla el español.
(true passive)	Los libros son vendidos en las librerías.
(Romance passive)	Se venden los libros en las librerías.

You can expect your students to have problems learning passive constructions in English given its infrequent occurrence in Spanish.

Prepositional Usage

8. A major source of problems for the Spanish speaker learning English is the difference in prepositional usage between English and Spanish. For example, corresponding to the Spanish preposition en, you will find English in, on, at; you will also find Spanish sobre corresponding to English on, over, above, and on top of. As you can see, there isn't a one-to-one correspondence between Spanish and English prepositions. This will be very confusing at first to your students. In some cases, you may wish to show what the different prepositions mean in English by illustrating them with pictures taken from magazines. For example, you might show an object on top of something, over something, on something, etc.

Differences between Spanish and English

There are many other differences between Spanish and English grammar that can be described. If you are interested in these, you might want to refer to items in the bibliography. Despite what might appear as a bewildering number of differences between English and Spanish, compared to the differences that exist between English and languages such as Chinese, Vietnamese or Khmer, Spanish and English are very similar. However, two major differences between English and Spanish that can be sources of problems pertain to what are called synthetic process and scrambling rules.

Spanish Verbs

Synthetic processes: Unlike English, Spanish has a complicated set of inflectional endings for its verbs. These endings tell the hearer who the person is, the tense being referred to and other information:

<u>English</u>	<u>Spanish</u>
I describe	describo
you describe	describes
she/he describes	describe
we describe	describimos
they describe	describen

<u>English</u>		<u>Spanish</u>	
I described	= describí or	describiera or	describía
you described	= describiste	describieras	describías
he/she described	= describió	describiera	describía
we described	= describimos	describiéramos	describíamos
you described	= describieron	describieran	describían

There are additional forms of the verb in Spanish that are not indicated here. It is these inflectional endings that allow Spanish to dispense with subject pronouns. Also, because of the rich inflectional system, Spanish does not use so-called modal verbs (may, can, should, would, will, etc.). Thus, this will be an additional source of problems for your students.

inflectional endings

modal verbs

Scrambling rules: Spanish, because of its inflectional system, allows very flexible word order:

scrambling

Juan quiere a María.	"John loves Mary."
Juan a María quiere.	"John loves Mary."
A María quiere Juan.	"John loves Mary."
Quiere a María Juan.	"John loves Mary."
A María Juan quiere.	"John loves Mary."

English, on the other hand, has fixed word-order. Your students will probably be tempted to scramble word order in English. This can make it very difficult to be understood in English: *John Mary loves/*Loves John Mary, etc. Your students will have to learn quickly to try to avoid scrambling word order in English.

Spanish Orthography

Spanish orthography

The Spanish language is written in the Roman alphabet. Although the letters K and W are found in the Spanish alphabet, the letter W is very rarely used, while the letter K is generally used only in relation to the metric system (e.g., kilo, etc.). The only letter that your student is apt to have problems with in writing is the letter W. None of the other letters in the English alphabet should prove a problem insofar as learning to write them is concerned.

[This assumes your students are able to read and write Spanish.]

Most of your Cuban students will probably be literate to some degree in Spanish. If the entrant is not literate in Spanish, then you should read the LORC Refugee Education Guide, Teaching ESL to

literacy

ascertain if your student is literate

Illiterate Adults," before attempting to teach English spelling. Be sure that your student is literate. Ask the student to write (or have someone translate the request for you) a short paragraph describing some aspect of his homelife in Cuba. Even if you don't read Spanish yourself, it should be clear whether he can write or not. If he can write, you can assume that he can read (how well he can perform either of these two tasks is another matter).

letters have different values

regularity of Spanish spelling

complexity of English spelling

The main problem in teaching a literate Spanish-speaker to read and write English is simply that the letters in Spanish often have different values from those in English. For example, in Spanish, with the sole exception of the letter H, every letter that occurs in written Spanish is pronounced in a fairly consistent manner---at least insofar as the prestigious pronunciation is concerned. The f-sound in Spanish is always represented by the letter F; the letter F is always pronounced as an f-sound. There is a regular relationship between sound and letter---although it should be pointed out that the relationship is not perfect, there are exceptions. Compare this with the English spelling representation of the f-sound: graph, laugh, fear, differ, etc. English spelling is full of silent letters such as those in hour, chassis, night, mnemonic, pterodactyl, corps, etc. That colonel and kernel are pronounced alike should be a good clue that English can be quite irregular. Despite what would appear to be utter chaos, there is a degree of regularity to English spelling (otherwise few would be able to learn it at all).

spelling problems

The following table discusses some of the salient problems that might arise in teaching English spelling to a Spanish-speaker. The discussion will be from the point of view of English spelling. You should keep in mind that problems arising from differences between English and Spanish orthography are superimposed on problems arising from differences between Spanish and English phonology (systems of pronunciation). For example, the letter K is an infrequent letter in Spanish. Generally, this letter represents similar sounds in both languages. However, when this letter appears in the English word back, a problem arises from a phonological conflict, namely, Spanish does not usually have k-sounds at the end of words. Thus, the Spanish-speaker learning English spelling will encounter a pronunciation problem, and this will impact on his spelling. Unless the student has mastered the k-sound at the end of a word like back, he will have difficulties both hearing and pronouncing this sound as

pronunciation and spelling problems

well as learning to spell the word correctly. Thus, as a rule of thumb, don't teach spelling of a given word until a consistent pronunciation has been mastered by your student for such a word. This means, in effect, don't teach spelling of words that your student has not yet learned to pronounce.

mastery of
consistent
pronunciation

ENGLISH LETTER

PROBLEMS YOUR SPANISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS MIGHT HAVE IN LEARNING TO EITHER SPELL OR READ WORDS WITH THIS LETTER

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| A | This letter will be a problem. In Spanish, this letter represents a sound similar to the vowel in the English word <u>hot</u> . This is the only value the letter A ever has in Spanish. In English, the letter A may represent various vowel sounds: <u>have</u> , <u>save</u> , <u>are</u> , <u>above</u> , etc. All vowel letters in English are a potential source of great confusion for your student. | letter 'A' |
| B | The letters B and V are not distinguished in pronunciation in Spanish. To add to the confusion, the letters B and V are sometimes pronounced with a <u>b</u> -sound, at other times with a <u>v</u> -sound. You can count on B being a problem. | letter 'B' |
| C | Both English and Cuban Spanish often pronounce this letter in similar ways. However, for phonological reasons, the letter C before another consonant or at the end of a word will be a problem (the <u>k</u> -sound does not occur in such word positions in Spanish). | letter 'C' |
| CH | This combination of letters is a problem, since in Spanish this combination represents a sound similar to the <u>ch</u> in English <u>chair</u> . In English, CH can represent different sounds: <u>chair</u> , <u>character</u> , <u>chic</u> . This letter combination is an excellent example of the need for teaching the pronunciation (and meaning) <u>before</u> the spelling. | letter combination 'CH' |
| D | The letter D in Spanish can vary between a <u>d</u> -sound and a sound similar to the <u>th</u> in <u>thus</u> . In Cuban Spanish, the letter D is usually <u>not</u> pronounced at the end of a word. The letter D in English can sometimes be pronounced like a sound similar to Spanish <u>r</u> : <u>bidder</u> , <u>caddy</u> , etc. While this <u>r</u> -sound will not be much of a problem for the Spanish-speaker learning English, the fact that English can represent this sound by the letter(s) D(D) or T(T) (as in <u>ladder</u> and <u>latter</u>) is a problem. | letter 'D'

letters 'DD' and 'TT' |
| E | This letter represents a sound in Spanish similar to the vowel in the English word <u>met</u> . However, the English letter E also represents other vowel sounds: <u>me</u> , <u>been</u> . Further, the letter is often silent in English: <u>have</u> , <u>quite</u> . As with all English vowel letters, the letter E is a source of difficulty for the Spanish-speaker learning English. | letter 'E' |

- EE, EA, etc. English uses combinations of vowel letters to represent single vowels; this represents an additional source of problems for the Spanish-speaker since in Spanish sequences of vowel letters always represent two or more distinct vowels: compare Spanish sea with English sea.
- F The letter tends to have the same value in both languages.
- G Before the letters A, O, and U, both languages generally have similar pronunciations for the letter G. Before the letters I and E, Spanish pronounces the G as an h-sound, while English has two possible pronunciations: girl, gill, vs. gin, general (words like rouge, beige, etc., are an additional problem). The Spanish-speaker will have to learn a new value for the letter G before the letters E and I.
- GH This letter combination in English is a potential source of problems for the Spanish-speaker. English GH can be pronounced in various ways---it can also be silent: ghost, ghetto, laugh, rough, although, thought, etc. The combination GH does not occur in Spanish.
- H In Spanish, the letter H occurs either in combination with the letter C (as in muchacha) or else it occurs as a silent letter (as in honor, hora, hasta, etc.). In English, the letter H is sometimes silent (as in honor, hour, etc.) and sometimes sounded (as in hole, have). This will be a spelling problem---not a pronunciation problem.
- I This letter always represents in Spanish the sound of vowel in the English word head. In English, it can have various sounds. In general, the letter will be a problem.
- J In Spanish, this letter represents an h-sound. The Spanish-speaker will have to learn a new value for this letter. This will not be a major problem.
- K This letter represents similar sounds in both languages. However, depending on where in the word the letter occurs, there may be a phonological problem.
- L This letter represents somewhat similar sounds in both languages before a vowel; after a vowel (or at the end of a word), there is a phonological problem (see discussion below).
- LL In Spanish, this letter combination represents a y-sound. Your student will have to learn a new value to the letter combination---a relatively minor problem.

- M Generally pronounced the same way in both languages--except at the end of a word where Cuban Spanish generally does not have m-sounds, a phonological problem causing difficulties in spelling.
- N Before a vowel, pronounced the same in both languages. At the end of a word, a phonological problem that will complicate learning to spell words ending with this letter, since Spanish does not distinguish between [n], [m] and [ng] at the end of words.
- NG This combination has the same value in both languages sometimes: tango. This combination does not occur at the end of words in written Spanish. What will be a problem is that the letter N at the end of a word is pronounced with an ng-sound. This will be a big problem. Your students will take a considerable amount of time learning to untangle word-final M's, N's and Ng's. Be extra patient. (It will be easier for your students to learn the correct spelling than the pronunciation, especially at first.)
- O Spanish letter O is pronounced something like the O in Rome. English has various pronunciations for this letter. You can expect a major problem.
- P No major problem since both languages have similar values for this letter. However, English P is sometimes silent (as in corps, etc.). Spanish P does not occur at the end of words.
- PH This letter combination is a minor problem since the combination does not occur in Spanish. Your student will quickly learn to pronounce it as F.
- R If you pronounce all the R's in a word, this will not be a great problem for the Spanish speaker. If you drop your R's, then there will be a serious spelling problem (not pronunciation problem, per se).
- If you drop your R's, do not change your pronunciation and sound them. Pronounce the letter R in whatever way is natural for you.
- Silent letters are always a problem in learning to spell English words (and not just for Spanish-speakers, but for English-speakers also).
- S This letter can represent a [z] or an [s] sound in English, as well as a [zh] or [sh] sound:
- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|----------|------|
| house (verb) | house (noun) | pleasure | sure |
| [z] | [s] | [zh] | [sh] |
- Spanish S is usually an s sound, but in Cuban Spanish may be a silent letter:

casa
[s]

esto
o

Thus, the letter S in English is a serious problem since the letter represents various pronunciations, in addition to which it is silent in some positions in Cuban Spanish orthography.

letter combination 'SH' SH

This is a combination that usually is pronounced as [sh] in English---she, share. Both the sound and the letter combination are absent in Spanish. Thus, both the combination and the sound itself are learning problems.

letter 'T' T

Generally, both Spanish and English pronounce this letter as [t]. However, English has various pronunciations in addition to [t]:

[sh] : initial
[ch] : feature

in addition to an r-sound flap as in Betty. Where the letter T is pronounced differently from Spanish T, problems can be expected.

letter combination 'TH' TH

This letter combination has two pronunciations:

[θ] : thin, three, bath
[ð] : the, thy, then

This combination does not occur in Spanish. The sound [θ] does not occur in Cuban Spanish; the sound [ð] occurs as a variation of the sound set /d/. Thus, it is fairly certain that the combination TH will be a source of problems.

letter 'U' U

This vowel letter has several pronunciations in English (in Spanish, it usually has the pronunciation similar to English oo in moot). Since this letter in English rarely represents a sound similar to Spanish U, it can be considered as a potential source of problems.

letter 'V' V

This letter occurs in Spanish, but is not functionally distinguished from the sounds for the letter B. A major problem can be anticipated with the teaching of words written with the letter V in English.

letter 'W' W

This letter is very infrequent in Spanish. The student may have to be taught how to write the letter. For practical purposes, this is a new letter that will have to be learned. The pronunciation ought not to be a major problem.

letter combination 'WH' WH

This letter combination is a minor problem. The combination does not occur in Spanish. You may pronounce this combination as simply as W: whet and wet are pronounced as [wet]. You may pronounce this combination as [hw]. If you pronounce W and WH the same way, your student will have to master a minor spelling problem; if you pronounce W and WH differently, then your student will encounter one less problem in learning to spell

English. Under no circumstances should you pronounce wh as [hw] if this is not your usual pronunciation. Your student will soon find out that some speakers of English make the W/WH distinction, while others do not.

letter combination 'WR'	WR	This combination does not occur in Spanish. The W is silent in this combination: <u>w</u> rite, <u>w</u> rought, etc.
letter 'X'	X	This should not be a problem, since X is pronounced [x] in most cases in Spanish: <u>e</u> xamen, <u>t</u> exto. (It might be silent for some speakers before a consonant <u>texto</u> [teto] - in which it would be a problem.)
letter 'Y'	Y	Not a problem.
letter 'Z'	Z	A problem since it will be pronounced as [s] instead of [z]. The [z]-sound does not generally occur in Cuban Spanish.

The names of the letters should be taught rather early. The order of the letters in English is somewhat different from that in Spanish. This should be explained to the student:

names of the letters

Spanish alphabet (used for alphabetizing)

a, b, c, ch, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, ll, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z.

alphabetic order

Note that the letter combinations in Spanish CH, LL, count as singular letters. Thus the following alphabetization order is found in Spanish:

CASA, CERO, CITA, CODO, CUNA, CHATO, CHICO, CHULO
LANA, LIGA, LOSA, LUGAR, LLAMAR, LLORO,
NADA, NIDO, NUDO, ÑAME, ÑU

The alphabetic order in English will have to be taught specifically (a relatively minor problem).

Although teaching English spelling might seem a very complicated task, the task is made a great deal easier if you only teach spelling after your student has mastered the pronunciation and meaning of the words in question. The rules for English spelling are complex and subtle at times. Do not try to give spelling rules to your students. Unfortunately, the most common words in English tend to be spelled in irregular fashion. Learning to write English is a very sophisticated task. Notice how many native English-speakers fail to learn to spell correctly! You should follow what is called the natural order of language acquisition: first you learn to distinguish, then to pronounce, then to read, finally to write.

teaching spelling

Lesson One

[v] and [b]

[v]

vile
veil
veered
very
vat
van
vow
vote

lover
river

rove
live
curve

curve
on the curve
Accidents happen on the curve.

calves
the calves
find the calves
Where did you find the calves?

vote
a vote
entitled to a vote
Not everyone is entitled to a vote.

veil
cotton veil
buy a cotton veil
Vicki wants to buy a cotton veil.

[b]

bile
bale
beard
berry
bat
ban
bow
boat

lubber
ribber

robe
Lib
curb

curb
on the curb
Accidents happen on the curb.

cabs
the cabs
find the cabs
Where did you find the cabs?

boat
a boat
entitled to a boat
Not everyone is entitled to a boat.

bale
cotton bale
buy a cotton bale
Vicki wants to buy a cotton bale.

Notes

1. [b] and [v] are not distinguished functionally in Spanish. This means that sometimes a word beginning, say, with a [b] sound will be pronounced at other times with a [v]-type sound. Written Spanish distinguishes between the letter b and the letter v. The spoken language does not distinguish between words written with one or the other letter. This is a potential source of great difficulty for the Spanish-speaker learning English.
2. Spanish has a [v]-type sound that is produced by bringing the lips together; the English [v] sound is produced by bringing the lower lip close to the upper lip. Indicate to your student that the lips and teeth are involved in producing an English [v] sound. Insist that the student do this in order to distinguish [v] from [b].
3. Keep in mind that the Spanish-speaker has to first realize that there is a pronunciation difference between English [v] and [b].

Lesson Two

[θ] and [t]

[θ] (thank)

~~thick~~
thigh
thin
thought
three
bath
tooth
math

[t] (tank)

tick
tie
tin
taught
tree
bat
toot
mat

thin
a thin man
He's a thin man.

tin
a tin man
He's a tin man.

bath
a bath
I took a bath.

bat
a bat
I took a bat.

There are three trees in the yard.
Thank you for the tie.
They both took a bath on the boat.
She taught math.
I thought he taught English.

Notes

1. [θ] as in thank does not occur in Cuban Spanish. Your students are apt to confuse this sound with either [t] or [s]. They will need help in learning to hear the difference between [θ] and [t], as well as between [θ] and [s].
2. [θ], [t] and (for many Cubans) [s] do not occur at end of words. You should first help your students in learning the difference between [θ] and [t] at the beginning of words. After they have mastered that distinction, then introduce the difference between [θ] and [t] at the end of words.

Lesson Three

[θ], [s], and [t]

[θ]

thighs
thank
thick
myth
bath
kith
path

[s]

sighs
sank
sick
miss
bass
kiss
pass

[t]

ties
tank
tick
mitt
bat
kit
pat

mouse

a big mouse

What a big mouse!

team

a good team

It's a good team.

It's unsinkable.

The pass was open.

Where's the boat?

He taught all day. He sought all day.

I thought Tom's birthday was last week.

Ruth is too thin.

Sid was singing in the bathtub.

Sam wants some rice.

Thank you for the bat and mitt.

mouth

a big mouth

What a big mouth!

theme

a good theme

It's a good theme.

It's unthinkable.

The path was open.

Where's the booth?

He thought all day.

Notes

1. The [θ] sound is the one spelled th in thin, NOT the sound spelled th in then. The th sound in then will be worked on later.
2. The [θ] sound does not occur in Cuban Spanish. It does occur in some of the dialects spoken in Spain. Most Spanish-speakers are aware that Spaniards pronounce words written with the letter c or z as [θ]: cinco [θinko] in Madrid, but [sinko] in Cuba. You might wish to draw attention to this.
3. [θ] is apt to be confused with [s], although [t] is also likely. This is due to the fact that this sound does not occur in Cuban Spanish. The Cuban Spanish-speaker will readily distinguish between [s] and [t] (in the beginning of words).

Lesson Four

[p], [t], and [k] at the ends of words

[p]

cap
sip
cape
whip
cope
sop
sheep
weep
map
wrap
lip
creep

cope
to cope
I need to cope

sheep
the sheep
Look at the sheep!

It's a big map.
He bought a cape.
He found a wrap in the lab.

When do they reap the wheat?
Kate is weak from being sick.
She bought a cape and a coat.
That cake is too sweet.
Jake wrote a note to Pat.
Coke is her favorite drink.
Mack drew a map on a mat.

[t]

sat
sit
Kate
wit
coat
~~sot~~
sheet
wheat
mat
rat
lit
Crete

coat-
a coat
I need a coat.

sheet
the sheet
Look at the sheet!

It's a big mat.
He bought a cake.
He found a rat in the lab.

[k]

sack
sick
cake
wick
Coke
~~sock~~
sheik
week
Mac
rack
lick
creak

Coke
a Coke
I need a Coke.

sheik
the sheik
Look at the sheik!

It's a Big Mac.
He bought a Mack.
He found a rack in the lab.

Notes

1. Word-final [p], [t], and [k] do not occur in Cuban Spanish. Your students will have some difficulty in learning to recognize the differences between these three consonants. Before you have them repeat words ending in any of these three consonants, be sure your students recognize the differences first.
2. In correcting your students' pronunciation of the word sheep, for example, they might mispronounce the initial consonant (as cheap). Focus your correction only on their pronunciation of the final [p]; correcting everything at the same time may be counterproductive.

Lesson Five

[y] and [j] in initial and medial positions

[y]

use
you
yam
Yale
yellow
yip
year

weighing
saying

yams
sweet yams
I like sweet yams.

Yale
to Yale
He went to Yale.

That's a bad yolk.

Hugh and George are Jewish.
Jack gypped you yesterday.
She used up the bowl of yellow jellow

[j]

Jews
Jew
jam
jail
jello
gyp
geer

waging
saging

jams
sweet jams
I like sweet jams.

jail
to jail
He went to jail.

That's a bad joke.

Note

1. Sounds similar to [y] and [j] occur in Cuban Spanish, but are not used to distinguish between words. A word such as yeso is sometimes pronounced as [yeso] and other times as [jeso]. Rules govern the alternation in pronunciation. English always makes a distinction between [j] and [y]. Thus, the Cuban Spanish-speaker will have to learn to make a distinction not normal in Spanish. The rules in Spanish are so ingrained that it is difficult to readily learn the distinction between [j] and [y]. This, of course, is the source of one of the most characteristic traits of a Spanish accent in English.

Lesson Six

[ð] and [d]

[ð] as in then

[d] as in den

they
their, there
the
them
this
that
these
those
father
brother
worthy

day
dare

fodder

wordy

father
no father
They have no father.

fodder
no fodder
They have no fodder.

worthy
He isn't worthy.

wordy
He isn't wordy.

They're my brothers.
Those were the days...
This is my father.
My father and mother were there.
We talked about the weather

Notes

1. Spanish /d/ can be realized as either a d-sound (as in dust) or a th-sound (as in thus). These two sounds can never be contrasted in Spanish, thus this contrast is a very difficult one for the Spanish speaker to master. It will take time for your student to master it. You might want to repeat this lesson several times, say in intervals of about one week apart.

Lesson Seven

Final [m], [n], and [ng]

[m]	[n]	[ng]
ham		hang
clam	clan	clang
tam	tan	tang
Kim	kin	king
	lawn	long
	thin	thing
them	then	
simmer	sinner	singer
sum	sun	sung
clan		clang
the clan		the clang
The clan was noisy.		The clang was noisy.
kin		king
our 'in		our king
Our kin came to the house.		Our king came to the house
tan		tam
a tan		a tam
He has a tan.		He has a tam.
ham		hang
Ham it up.		Hang it up.

Our team won the game.
 It's time to go home.
 I'm cooking the ham for Tim.
 Marianne got a fine tan on vacation.
 The king rang the gong.
 The young bird broke its wing.

Notes

1. This is one of the most difficult contrasts to master in English for any Spanish-speaker. It will take a long time. You should repeat this lesson many times, say once a week or so.
2. [m], [n], and [ng] do not contrast in Spanish at the end of words, or, for that matter, at the end of a syllable. The most frequent nasal sound at the end of a word in Cuban Spanish is [ng]: pan [pang] 'bread', sin [sing] 'without', hablan [avlang] 'they speak.' Some Cubans pronounce all syllable-final nasals as [ng]: un peso [ung peso] 'one peso', andan [angdang] 'they walk.' What this means is that many of your students will not hear nor pronounce the differences between sum, sun, and sung; some of your students may also pronounce gander as "gangder," dumping as "dungping" and lantern as "langternng." You should try to concentrate on teaching the different nasal sounds at the end of words first. The different nasal sounds within words is a problem, but it will be easier to take care of once the student can hear and pronounce the differences at the end of words.

Lesson Eight

[e] as in bet and [æ] as in bat

[e]

pen
bed
said
left
letter
guess
men
ten
beg
wreck
met
kept
mess

[æ]

pan
bad
sad
laughed
latter
gas
man
tan
bag
rack
mat
tapped
mass

pen
the pen
The pen is dirty.

pan
the pan
The pan is dirty.

men
the men
Call the men!

man
the man
Call the man!

left
They left.

laughed
They laughed.

Send the letter to the man.
They laughed and I left.
He wants some gas, I guess.
Say something glad not sad.
This is a bad bed.

He said he was sad.
The sad cat looked very fat.
Betty said she was glad.
The man kept the bag.
Ken can do it.

Note

1. Spanish lacks the distinction between the vowels in words like man and men. At times, the vowel in ran will also be confused with the vowel in Ron. You can expect your student to have considerable problems learning the vowel in words like cat, fat, tan.

Lesson Nine

[a] as in hot and [æ] as in hat

[a]

hot
rot
pop
top
con
Don
John
sod

[æ]

hat
rat
pap
tap
can
Dan
Jan
sad

Don
That's Don.

Dan
That's Dan.

John told Jan to wear a hat.
Ron ran home.
It's too hot to wear a hat.
Tap the top of the window.
The cat chased the rat.
Sam likes hot popcorn.

Note

1. You will find that many of your students will confuse the vowel sound [æ] with the vowel [a]. This is due to the fact that the vowel [æ] does not occur in Spanish. In fact, it is produced midway between Spanish /a/ and Spanish /e/. This is the reason why it is difficult for the Spanish-speaker to distinguish and produce vowels of the type found in cat, sad, etc.

Lesson Ten

[uw] as in pool and [u] as in pull

[uw]

pool
fool
suit
cooed
Luke
wooded

[u]

pull
full
soot
could
look
wood

Yes, she cooed.

The suit was black.

She stewed it for an hour.

1. A. What's Sue doing?
B. She's looking for her boots.
2. A. Would you put on this suit?
B. I would, if I could.
3. A. Should I clean the pool?
B. The sooner you do it, the better.

Notes

1. [u] as in pull does not occur in Spanish. Your student will confuse it with the vowel as in pool or as in pup. In general, this vowel will sound to your student like the vowel in Spanish su or sol. This will be a difficult contrast both to distinguish and produce at first.
1. This is one of those pronunciation problems that should be attended to after other contrasts have been learned. Do not spend a lot of time on this distinction. The [u] - [uw] distinction in English has a relatively low functional load--that is, not too many words can be contrasted with just this vocalic difference.

Lesson Eleven

[æ], [e] and [a]

[æ] as in band

add
band
axe
can
~~rack~~
sad
laughed
bag

rack
a rack
They found a rack in the lab.

[e] as in bend

Ed
bend
ex
Ken
wreck
said
left
beg

wreck
a wreck
They found a wreck in
the lab.

[a] as in bond

odd
bond
ox
con
rock
sod
loft
bog

rock
a rock
They found a rock in
the lab.

He avoided the wreck.
He made a big racket.
She was very bland.
Step over there.
He was embarrassed to bag.
The mouse was in the bag.

He avoided the rock.
He made a big rocket.
She was very blond.
Stop over there.
He was embarrassed to beg.
The mouse was in the bog.

1. A. Where's the black cat?
B. It's under Ed's cot in the den.
2. A. Did you pack your floppy black hat?
B. No, you can't pack a hat in a knapsack.
3. A. Stan dropped the can of pop.
B. Ken, get me the mop.
4. A. Did Ed think it was odd to add the numbers?
B. No, but he laughed when I left the loft.

Note

1. Your students will not have any particular problems pronouncing [e] and [a], since there are similar sounds in Spanish to these two vowels. However, the problem that will arise is in relation to [æ] since such a sound does not occur in Spanish and will sometimes sound like [e] and other times like [a] to your students. This is an important distinction that your students will have to learn and is worth spending time teaching it.

Lesson Twelve

[i] as in bit and [iy] as in beet

[i]

bit
mitt
rid
tin
live
strict
lid
bin
dim
gin
hip
Tim
bid

[iy]

beat
meat
read
teen
leave
streaked
lead
bean
-deem
Gene
heap
team
bead

sheep
a big sheep
It's a big sheep.

ship
a big ship
It's a big ship.

lead
the lead
We took the lead.

lid
the lid
We took the lid.

He's sleeping. He's slipping
Can you feel it? Can you fill it?

He's leaving. He's living.
Jim bit the dog. Jim beat the dog.

Is this drill difficult? No, it's easy.
How many figs did you eat?
He's eating peaches.
I need a dish for the meat.
Can you reach it?
Gene doesn't like to drink gin.
Tim joined the team.

Notes

1. The vowel [i] as in bit does not occur in Spanish. This vowel will sound like the vowel in Spanish si to your students. Consequently, you can expect your students to have difficulty in distinguishing and producing the two English vowels [i] and [iy] as in bid/bead. The distinction is an important one in English so that you should spend some time in getting your students to perceive first the differences and then trying to get them to produce the two different vowels consistently. Plan on returning to this exercise several times.
2. The vowel [iy] as in sit is about halfway between the Spanish vowels [i] and [e]. This means that your students will sometimes confuse the vowel in sit with the vowel in set.

Lesson Thirteen

[iy], [i], and [e]

[iy] as in beet

beat
peak
scene
leafed
reach
neat
feel
meet
cheat
teen
peen
ream
reek

[i] as in bit

bit
pick
sin
lift
rich
knit
fill
mitt
chit
tin
pin
rim
Rick

[e] as in bet

bet
peck
send
left
wretch
net
fell
met
Chet
ten
pen
rem
wreck

beat
beat it
He beat it.

bit
bit it
He bit it.

bet
bet it
He bet it.

scene
a scene
What a scene!

sin
a sin
What a sin!

lift
lift it
We lift it.

left
left it
We left it.

We feed the sheep.
Don't sleep on the deck
of the ship.

We fed the sheep.
Don't slip on the deck
of the ship.

Please sit here in this seat.
Brett didn't win the bet.
Those men are mean.
Do you still steal?
This lesson is easy.
Did Dennis get his check?
Rick was involved in a wreck.
Chet saw a neat net.

Note

1. Your students will not have any particular problem distinguishing [iy] and [e] as in seat and set. There are similar vowels in Spanish to these. However, the English vowel [i] as in sit is produced midway between the Spanish vowels /i/ and /e/ as in si and se. Thus, your student will sometimes hear the "short" i as either [iy] or [e]. Likewise, he will encounter some problems in learning to pronounce the "short" i consistently. These vocalic distinctions are important to learn in English. You will have to return to this lesson several times.

Lesson Fourteen

[ɔ] as in caught and [ow] as in coat

[ɔ]

caught
bought
wrought
taught
naught
maw
raw
law
doll
call
paw
saw
Wagh
slaw

[ow]

coat
boat
wrote
tote
note
Mo
row
low
dole
coal
Poe
so
woe
slow

saw
saw the coat
They saw the coat.

sew
sew the coat
They sew the coat.

Dawn caught her coat.
The raw materials were in a row.
So Mo said he saw it.
Call the coal company.
The tall man took the toll.
My cat Poe hurt his paw.

Notes

1. The sound [ɔ] is absent from Spanish. This sound in English is produced midway between Spanish /o/ and Spanish /a/. For this reason, the sound [ɔ] will sometimes sound like [o] and at other times like [a] to your Spanish-speaking students. If your students identify [ɔ] as [a], and learn to do it consistently, they will have few problems making themselves understood. The goal here is to assure that your students make a consistent differentiation between [ɔ] and [ow].
2. As noted earlier, many Americans do not consistently distinguish between [ɔ] and [a]. However, all English-speakers do contrast the vowels in law and low. Do not spend much time on the [ɔ] and [a] distinction, but do stress the [ɔ] and [ow] contrast.

Lesson Fifteen

[ɔ] as in caught and [a] as in cot

[ɔ]

caught
sought
wrought
taught
naught

[a]

cot
sot
rot
tot
not

John taught the tot.
The effort was not for naught.
The cot was caught by the wind.
The doctor fought dry rot.
Dan ought not to have bought it.

Notes

1. The [ɔ] and [a] is a different distinction for the Spanish-speaker to make. Spanish lacks a vowel similar to [ɔ]. To your student, [ɔ] will sometimes sound like his Spanish /a/ and at other times, like his /o/. This is another case where English has a distinction midway between two Spanish vowels.
2. Many Americans do not distinguish between [ɔ] and [a]. Many dialects in the Rocky Mountain area of the United States pronounce words such as caught and cot with the same vowel: [a]. The distinction is obviously not very critical since people from the Rocky Mountain area do not have any problems speaking English with people who do make a distinction between [ɔ] and [a]. If you make a distinction between [ɔ] and [a], you should try to teach it to your students. However, we would predict that your students will have a problem making and hearing the difference. You should settle for having your students pronounce [ɔ] as [a]. But, note that since [ɔ] is midway between Spanish /a/ and /o/, often your students will hear [ɔ] as [o]. This will be a source of pronunciation difficulties since most English-speakers do distinguish between words such as caught and coat. The distinction between [ɔ] and [a] is not crucial (given the fact that many native-English-speakers do not make the contrast) and you should not spend too much time on it.

Lesson Sixteen

[a] as in cot and [ə] as in cut

[a]

cot
cod
cop
cob
Don
dock
sop
Ron
wan
pot
bought
rob

[ə]

cut
cud
cup
cub
done
duck
sup
run
won
putt
but
rub

the dock
near the dock
The boat was near the dock.

the duck
near the duck
The boat was near the duck.

rob
to rob
to rob the gold
The king wants to rob the gold.

rub
to rub
to rub the gold
The king wants to rub the gold.

Don has done his homework.
Ron likes to run.
He cut the cot with a knife.
The cub ate the cob.
He used a pot to putt in.
John likes to eat cod for supper.

Note

1. The sound [ə] is absent from Spanish. The vowel [ə] will sound like either /a/ or /o/ to the Spanish-speaker. The distinction between [a] and [ə] will be difficult for your student to master. He/she will require a lot of practice in hearing the distinction.

Lesson Seventeen

[ə] as in cut and [ow] as in coat

[ə]

cut
but
mutt
bun
rust
fun
cup
rub
mud
nut
rut
puck
ton
dumb
come

[ow]

coat
boat
moat
bone
roast
phone
cope
robe
mole
note
wrote
poke
tone
dome
comb

nut
the nut
the nut on the table
He left the nut on the table.

note
the note
the note on the table
He left the note on the table.

bun
a bun
found a bun
The dog found a bun.

bone
a bone
found a bone
The dog found a bone.

He thought he had found rust on the roast.
The teacher said that the dome was dumb.
The boy liked to have fun with the phone.
The kid threw the mutt into the moat.
She cut her coat with a nail.
He wrote me saying he was in a rut.

Note

1. The vowel [ə] does not occur in Spanish. Your students will confuse this vowel with either [a] or [ow]. You will have to repeat this lesson various times. The distinction is important in English and warrants some time spent on learning the distinction.

Lesson Eighteen

[s] at end of words vs. no final [s] at end of words

no final [s]

knee
eye
pea
lay
saw
my
moo
Kay
Lee
die
how
pay
gray
tray
may

final [s]

niece
ice
peace
lace
sauce
mice
moose
case
lease
dice
house
pace
grace
trace
mace

pea
the pea
needs the pea
The cook needs the pea.

piece
the piece
needs the piece
The cook needs the piece.

eye
my eye
on my eye
a fly on my eye
There's a fly on my eye.

ice
my ice
on my ice
a fly on my ice
There's a fly on my ice.

It's a sharp saw.
The Hawaiian lei is pretty.

It's a sharp sauce.
The Hawaiian lace is pretty.

My aunt has a pretty knee.

My aunt has a pretty niece.

My mice are gray.
How big is your house?
The building is gray and lacks grace.
There's a trace of grease on my tray.

Notes

1. Cuban Spanish either does not have [s] at ends of words, or substitutes an [h] at the end of a word: adiós [adió] or [adióh]. Your students will probably be able to hear the [s] at the end of an English word, but will either not pronounce it or substitute an [h] when they try to repeat such a word. They will require a great deal of practice to learn to pronounce [s] in such cases.

2. It is very important that they learn to pronounce word-final [s] in English since a lot of grammar depends on the presence of this sound in certain circumstances. If you speak Spanish, you might want to ask your students to mimic a Mexican accent--most Mexicans generally pronounce word-final [s].

Lesson Nineteen

No final stop, /b/, and /p/

no final stop

/b/ as in rubu and /p/

/p/ as in tap ---

row
caw
low
saw
ma

robe
lobe
sob
mob
cob
tab
rib
sib
nab
pub
cub
mob
crib
lab

rope
cop
lope
sop
mop

tap
rip
sip
nap
pup
cup
mop
crip
lap

row
a long row
It's a long row.

robe
a long robe
It's a long robe.

rope
a long rope
It's a long rope.

cub
a little cub
There's a little cub
in a cage.

cup
a little cup
There's a little cup
in a cage.

I broke my rib.
I have a rip in my cape.
We saw a row of low buildings.
I got a pup for my birthday.
Use a mop to clean the floor.
The baby is in his crib.
The pup is on my lap.

Notes

1. In general, final stops do not occur at the end of words in Spanish. Once your student is able to distinguish between /t/, /p/ and /k/ at the ends of words, he will next have to distinguish between voiced and voiceless pairs.
2. The exercise begins by contrasting no final stop, /b/ and /p/. He will have a tendency to either drop the /b/ or /p/, or even add an epenthetic vowel (that is, an 'extra' vowel) to the word. The extra vowel might sound like /e/.
3. You can expect your students to have problems distinguishing between /p/ and /b/ at first.

Lesson Twenty

no final stop, /d/ and /t/

no final stop

/d/ as in bad

/t/ as in bat

row
may
bay
knee
tie
me
see
tree
Cree
try
day

road
made
bayed
need
tide
mead
seed
treed
creed
tried
Dade

wrote
mate
bait
neat
tight
meat
seat
treat
Crete
trite
date

cod
a cod
a small cod
It's a small cod.

cot
a cot
a small cot
It's a small cot.

seed
an old seed
They found an old seed.

seat
an old seat
They found an old seat.

Jim had the ball.
She led me into the
office.
The bay was muddy.

Jim hit the ball.
She let me into the
office.
The bait was muddy.

I need to write a letter to Ed.
The heavy load made a hole in the road.
May I borrow your bright tie?
I didn't lose weight on the fad diet.
She wrote that the road was terrible.
The boys need a neat apartment.
He took his date to Dade County.
Her mate made some fudge.

Notes

1. Spanish does not have /d/ or /t/ in word-final position (the letter D, however, does occur in final position in Spanish, but it represents a sound similar to the th in English breathe or it is a silent letter for many Cuban Spanish-speakers.) Your students will have a tendency to either not pronounce a /d/ or /t/ in final position, or, they might add an extra vowel after the /d/ or /t/.
2. If your students add an extra vowel at the end of words ending in /t/ or /d/, you might try pronouncing a word like ride both with the extra vowel and contrasting it without the extra vowel. Until your students hear that they are adding an extra vowel, it will be difficult for them to understand your corrections in regard to this particular problem.

Lesson Twenty-One

no final stop, /g/ and /k/

no final stop

/g/ as in lag

/k/ as in lack

Lee

league

leak

law

log

lock

baa

bag

back

bah

bog

bock

league

leak

sag

sack

bag

back

pig

pick

nag

knack

rag

rack

rig

Rick

dug

duck

bug

buck

lag

lack

brig

brick

tag

tack

a league

a leak

a major league

a major leak

This is a major league.

This is a major leak.

a bug

a buck

a bug at the zoo

a buck at the zoo

We saw a bug at the zoo.

We say a buck at the zoo.

Take it out of the bag.

Take it out of the back.

We're facing a lag in
production

We're facing a lack in
production.

There's a stag in the
woods.

There's a stack in the
woods.

I found a tag on the
floor.

I found a tack on the
floor.

Ask Lee to lock the back door.

A duck sat on a log in the lake.

Is the farmer's pig sick?

That bag of ice has a leak.

I found a brick in the alley.

My apartment has a black rug.

Notes

1. Spanish does not have /g/ and /k/ in word-final positions as a rule. Your students will have difficulty distinguishing between /g/ and /k/ at first in word-final positions. There is the possibility that your students may simply not pronounce final /g/ and /k/, or add an extra vowel at the end of the word.
2. All voiced-voiceless stop contrasts are relatively important to learn well since subsequent pronunciation rules depend on the contrast (such as plural, etc.).

Lesson Twenty-Two

Pre-consonantal [s] as in west

words without pre-consonantal [s] words with pre-consonantal [s]

boat
bait
back
lip
wait
wet
pat
cat
Mack
mat
net
hit
flack
great
goat

boast
baste
bask
lisp
waist
west
past
cast
mask
mast
nest
hissed
flask
graced
ghost

cat
the cat
Look at the cat.

cast
the cast
Look at the cast.

goat
a goat
I just saw a goat.

ghost
a ghost
I just saw a ghost.

My mice saw a gray cat.
The die is cast..
The moose bit my niece.
My niece has a pretty knee.
The west is not wet.
Mack has a mask.
The ghost scared the goat.
I hit the snake and it hissed at me.

Note

1. Many Cuban dialects of Spanish lack the sound [s] both at the end of words and before consonants, other speakers have an [h] sound instead of an [s] in such positions. Complicating the situation, many speakers of Cuban Spanish alternate between [h] and [s], while others alternate between [] and [h], yet others alternate between [h], [s] and []. What all this means is that it is fairly certain that your students will have some problems in producing [s] consistently in both word-final and pre-consonantal positions. You may frequently wish to remind them gently to pronounce [s].

Lesson Twenty-Three

/r/ and /l/ following a vowel

/r/ as in car and cart

bear
peer
core
rear
fire
mare
store
wear
fired
ford
order

/l/ as in bell and belt

bell
peal
coal
tell
file
meal
stole
well
filed
fold
older

The bear was wearing a little bell.
The girl was gazing at a gull.
Put more coal into the fire.
He stole a file from the store.
The old car hit a tall wall.

Notes

1. Some varieties of Cuban Spanish do not distinguish between /r/ and /l/ at the end of words or before another consonant. That is, Spanish words, such pairs as Marta and malta, mar and mal, etc., will be pronounced the same. Most speakers from Havana do make a contrast between /r/ and /l/. Consequently, you should try to see whether your students make a consistent contrast between /r/ and /l/ (you can do this by giving them a minimal pair drill using English pairs, such as bore and bowl).
2. There are certain problems that might come up with English /r/ and /l/. Many Americans do not have /r/ in word-final position or before another consonant. Other Americans may show a trace of word-final /r/ by use of a 'linking' R or by some variety of diphthongization. If you 'drop' your R's, don't expect your students to pronounce them. They should be imitating you. If you do pronounce your R's, keep in mind that you probably produce the r-sound by curling the tip of your tongue back. Spanish r-sounds are produced by flapping or trilling the tap of the tongue.
3. Many Americans pronounce /l/ at the end of a word or before another consonant with a type of sound called 'dark' L. Some Americans pronounce the L so velarized ('dark') that the sound has become vowel-like (vocalization). A vocalized /l/ will sound like a Spanish /u/. Thus, if you pronounce bill with a vocalized final /l/, your Spanish-speaking students will probably hear it as /bio/. Learning to produce a vocalized /l/ in English will not be worth the time since the Spanish equivalent /o/ will be interpreted as /l/ in that position by English-speakers. What is important is that your students distinguish between /l/ and /r/ sounds in word-final positions consistently, however they might make the sounds.

Lesson Twenty-Four

Consonant clusters with /s/ at the beginnings of words

/s/	/sl/	/sp/	/st/	/sn/	/sm/	/sw/	/sk/
sack	slack		stack	snack	smack		
sane	slain	Spain	stain			swain	skein
still		spill	still			swill	skill
soak		spoke	stoke		smoke		
sunk	slunk	spunk	stunk				skunk
		spare	stare	snare		swear	scare

Take up the sack. Take up the slack. Take up the stack.
 He's sane. He's slain.
 It's sunk. It's stunk.
 Don't stare at us. Don't swear at us.
 He's soaking in the tub. He's smoking in the tub.
 The pigs ate the swill. The pigs ate the spill.
 The girl gave the boy a snack. The girl gave the boy a smack.
 Old men like to stare. Old men like to swear.

The skunk scared Steven.
 After our snack, we smoked a cigarette.
 Stephanie spoke too soon.
 He's a skillful swimmer.
 She slipped in the snow.
 They swore they'd drive more carefully.
 Slide down the slope on the sled.
 The Swede skis better than the Scot.
 The swain was slain in Spain.
 The skunk stunk and he was scared.

Notes

- Spanish does not allow initial clusters with /s/. Depending on how your students treat pre-consonantal /s/ (as in este, hasta, etc.), you will probably get the following treatment of /s/ clusters in English:
 - (1) your student will place an epenthetic vowel /e/ before the /s/;
 - (2) they may pronounce the /s/, they may also simply drop the /s/, or they may substitute an h-sound in lieu of the /s/; or (3) they may do any of these substitutions at different times.
- If your students have an s-sound in preconsonantal position, then you should not bother correcting the epenthetic vowel insertion. They will be understood by English speakers if they say /e/-speak, /e/-Spanish, etc. Of course, this is a sign of a Spanish-speaker speaking English, it is understandable but not worth the time correcting (remember, they have to learn a fair amount of English in order to make themselves understood--there will be time later to correct an accent problem). If your students drop the s-sound, then you will have to teach them to make an s-sound in words like Spain, speak, and spin. Saying /e/-pin instead of spin may not be understood by many English-speakers.

Lesson Twenty-Five

Three-consonant clusters at beginnings of words

/spr/	/spl/	/str/	/skr/
sprain	spleen	strain	scream
spray	splash	straight	screw
spring	splurge	strong	scrub
spray	split	stride	scroll
spread	splinter	strand	screech
spruce	splat	strict	screen
sprout	splinter	string	scratch
sprawl	sprinkle	stretch	scruff

They solashed in the spring.
The spry old man took big strides.
The string kept the puppy from straying.
I need a strand of string.
The scream came from the square.
He screamed when she scratched him.
Ray spread butter on the split-top bread.
The sprinkler strained to splash the lawn..

Note

1. The same problems you encountered with the teaching of clusters beginning with /s/ will apply here. Spanish does not have any clusters beginning with /s/. You can expect an epenthetic vowel to be added to words beginning with /s/ plus two additional consonants. The suggestions made in Lesson Twenty-Four will apply here. (Note, in particular, that some Cuban Spanish-speakers may substitute an h-sound for the /s/, or even 'drop' the s entirely.)

Lesson Twenty-Six

/y/, /j/, and /zh/

/y/	/j/	/j/	/zh/ (as in measure)
Yale	jail	major	measure
yellow	Jello	pledger	pleasure
yell	jell	ages	Asia
yes	Jess	page	beige
yolk	joke	Jock	Jacques
yip	gyp		
yacht	jot		

yolk
a bad yolk
That was a bad yolk.

joke
a bad joke
That was a bad joke.

Yale
to Yale
He went to Yale.

jail
to jail
He went to jail.

It was yellow.
It hasn't rained in ages.
Give it to Jock.
What did he say, yes or Jess?

It was Jello.
It hasn't rained in Asia.
Give it to Jacques.

She used up the huge bowl of yellow Jello.
The wedge of onion gave off a pungent odor.
Bad yolks are no jokes.
Jack gypped you yesterday.
John drove his jeep to Yellowstone.
The seizure affects his vision.
Germany and Yugoslavia are both in Europe.
You will have to read the book with the beige pages.

Notes

1. Spanish /y/ can be pronounced with a diversity of forms. These range from a sound similar to English /y/ to /j/ and /zh/. All of these sounds are conditioned by complex rules, and not all necessarily are present in all Cuban dialects of Spanish (in particular the zh-sound as in pleasure may be absent). However, these sounds only occur before a vowel, never at the end of a word. Thus, a word like pledge will give your students particular problems since the sound [j] is new to them in that position.
2. The difference between /y/ and /j/ is a significant one in English.

However, given the noncontrasting nature of these sounds in Spanish, it is likely that your students are going to have many problems learning to distinguish these sounds. Be patient and spend some time on the pronunciation that /j/ and /y/ represent to Spanish-speakers learning English. You may wish to return to this lesson at different times throughout your course. However, do not spend too much time since other parts of the grammar will have to be mastered.

Lesson Twenty-Seven

Final /s/ and /z/

/s/

niece
ice
peace
lace
sauce
race
house (noun)
rice
bus
dice
face
hiss
advice
mace
pace

sauce
the sauce
I need the sauce.

lace
pretty lace
Hawaiians make pretty lace.

face
a different face
He's looking for a
different face.

We saw the place.
That's a good price.
His knee gave him trouble.

He hit his knee on the ice.
The bee made a buzz on the bus.
The first prize was a buzz saw.
What's new in the news?
Did you bring back any leis?
Is Tom putting rice in the drink?

/z/

knees
eyes
peas
leis
saws
raise
house (verb)
rise
buzz
dice
phase
his
advise
maze
pays

saws
the saws
I need the saws.

leis
pretty leis
Hawaiians make pretty leis.

phase
a different phase
He's looking for a
different phase.

We saw the plays.
That's a good prize.
His niece gave him trouble.

Notes

1. Spanish does not have a contrast between /s/ and /z/. In fact, many Cuban Spanish-speakers may lack the [z] sound entirely. [s] at the end of a word is a particular problem since some speakers may lack such a sound entirely; others may alternate an s-sound with an h-sound. Some speakers (particularly the more educated) may have a consistent [s] sound at the end of a word. You might be able to tell just what kind of problem your student will have by having him pronounce the Spanish words adiós, hasta la vista. Does he have [s] in these words? If so, he will have few problems learning /s/ in English. However, you can expect all Spanish-speakers to have a problem learning the /s/ and /z/ contrast.
2. Written Spanish has the letters S and Z. Both of these letters are pronounced the same when found in the same context. Both letters may be silent in some contexts for some speakers (as in adiós, hasta mañana, etc.).
3. The /s/ and /z/ is very important in English and is well worth the time trying to teach/learn it. Keep in mind that Cuban Spanish may well have both social and dialectal variation in the pronunciation of /s/ in word-final position, making it relatively difficult to learn the /s/ and /a/ distinction in English. You will have to remind your students to pronounce their s's often (as they probably were reminded to do so by their Spanish-speaking teachers teaching them more standard forms of Spanish).

Lesson Twenty-Eight

[ch] and [sh]

[ch] as in chair

choose
chair
cheat
cheese
chew
chip
cheek
chain

[sh] as in share

shoes
share
sheet
she's
shoe
ship
chic
Shane

matching
crutches
ditching
catching
watching

mashing
crushes
dishing
cashing
washing

match
much
batch
latch
watch
ditch
hatch

mash
mush
bash
lash
wash
dish
hash

watching
watching the baby
She's watching the baby.

washing
washing the baby
She's washing the baby.

chair
my chair
Take my chair.

share
my share
Take my share.

It's a cheat.
Are you catching the check?
He's mashing the potatoes.
He had to clean the ditch.

It's a sheet.
Are you cashing the check?
He's matching the potatoes.
He had to clean the dish.

Children shouldn't shout.
Which shoes did you choose?
The teacher is chewing out the cheater.
Charlie shared his cheese with me.
I had peaches and cheese for dinner.
I don't like much mush for breakfast.

Notes

1. [sh] and [ch] do not occur as contrasting units in Spanish. The sound [ch] occurs in all dialects of Cuban Spanish, but only in syllable-initial position. The sound [sh] may occur as a stylistic variant in the speech of some Cubans in place of [ch]--but this is rare. You can expect your students to have problems hearing the difference between [sh] and [ch] at first.
2. Neither [ch] nor [sh] occur at the end of words in Spanish. Your students will most likely substitute [sh] for [ch] saying mush instead of much. However, they will have to learn that the difference between [ch] and [sh] is meaningful in all positions in English. It is also possible that your student may drop sh or ch at the end of words.

Lesson Twenty-Nine

[ð], [d], and [z]

[ð] as in that

then
breathe
soothe
bathe
they
their

[d] as in day

den
breed
sued
bayed
day
dare

[z] as in zoo

Zen
breeze
Sue's
bays
Zayre

breed
breed quickly
Rabbits breed quickly.

breathe
breathe quickly
Rabbits breathe quickly.

D's are bad marks.
The baoy is teething.

These are bad marks.
The baby is teasing.

Bill's a little under the weather.
David and Louise loathe used clothes.
They like those things.
They don't dare go there.
The cool breeze was soothing.
The lion dozed in his den.

Notes

1. Spanish /d/ can be realized as either [ð] or [d]. These sounds do not contrast and will, accordingly, sound the same to the Spanish-speaker. The sound [z] does not occur in Cuban Spanish, although if it does, it would be as an alternate for [s], and would be non-contrasting in any event. English [ð] and [d] contrast with each other and with [z]. These contrasts will be difficult at first for your students.
2. Word-final [ð], [d] and [z] do not occur generally in Cuban Spanish. This will be a source for the problem your students will have with these sounds.

Lesson Thirty

Final Consonant Clusters with [s]

[ps]

cup/cups
/ˈvps
top/tops
wipe/wipes

[ts]

cat/cats
fit/fits
boot/boots
wait/waits

[ks]

walk/walks
tick/ticks
sack/sacks
book/books

[fs]

cuff/cuffs
cough/coughs
laugh/laughs
roof/roofs

[θs]

path/paths
myth/myths
death/deaths

He washed the cup.
She hit the ball.
It's Walt.
The boots fit.

He washed the cups.
She hits the ball.
It's Walt's. etc.
The boot fits.

Notes

1. In this lesson and the following one, we present the consonant clusters that arise with the English plurals (cup-cups), possessives (cat-cat's), present tense forms (wait-waits) and contractions (that-that's). These word-final clusters are a problem for Spanish-speakers since there are no word-final consonant clusters in Spanish. Also, it is a particular problem for many Cuban Spanish-speakers since final /s/ may not be pronounced at all or may be pronounced as an [h].
2. You may wish to deal with the pronunciation of these consonant clusters at the same time you teach the plural forms. Keep in mind that English has three pronunciations for the plural suffix -s: [s] (cats), [z] (dogs) and [əz] (foxes). In presenting the plural /əz/ suffix, first teach words that have the [s] sound, then the [z], finally the [əz] sound. But be sure that your students can hear the different sounds before you actually teach the variant pronunciations.
3. Don't go by the spelling of the plural suffix. Note how es is pronounced in the following words: mates, maids, churches.
[s] [z] [əz]

Lesson Thirty-One

Final Consonant Clusters with [z]

[bz]

cab/cabs
mob/mobs
gab/gabs
bib/bibs

[dz]

bed/beds
kid/kids
need/needs
read/reads

[gz]

bag/bags
dig/digs
egg/eggs
Greg/Greg's

[vz]

love/loves
give/gives
save/saves
olive/olives

[z]

bathe/bathes
breathe/breathes
clothe/clothes
lathe/lathe

[mz]

swim/swims
lime/limes
come/comes
jam/jams

[nz]

son/sons
pan/pans
Anne/Anne's
run/runs

[ngz]

king/kings
wing/wings
gang/gangs
song/songs

[rz]

car/cars
chair/chairs
sister/sisters
tear/tears

The bar closed early.
He sold the chair.
It's Anne.

The bars closed early.
He sold the chairs.
It's Anne's.

Note

1. Remember, Spanish lacks [z] sounds. This sound is a very important one to master. Even if you get your students to make only an [s] sound instead of [z], this will be an important step forward, since this sound substitution helps in being understood.

Lesson Thirty-Two

Final Consonant Clusters with [t]

[pt]

hope/hoped
type/typed
stop/stopped
ship/shipped

[kt]

like/liked
bake/baked
look/looked
pick/picked

[cht]

watch/watched
pitch/pitched
match/matched
latch/latched

[ft]

cough/coughed
laugh/laughed
goof/goofed
whiff/whiffed

[θt]

froth/frothed

[st]

miss/missed
promise/promised
pass/passed
press/pressed

[sht]

wish/wished
wash/washed
push/pushed
vanish/vanished

They hope so.
We bake bread.

They hoped so.
We baked bread.

Notes

1. These consonant clusters, and the ones presented in the following lesson, are those that arise in past and perfect tenses with regular verbs. Like the clusters with [s], they present a particular problem for Cuban Spanish-speakers. First, final clusters do not occur in Spanish, and second, Spanish /d/ and /t/ generally do not occur word-finally in Cuban Spanish.
2. You may wish to present this and the following lesson when you teach the past tense.
3. Note that these clusters with [t] are spelled with -ed.

Lesson Thirty-Three

Final Consonant Clusters with [d]

[bd]

rob/robbed
bribe/bribed
sob/sobbed
rub/rubbed

[gd]

beg/begged
sag/sagged
mug/mugged
nag/nagged

[jd]

damage/damaged
rage/raged
age/aged
rummage/rummaged

[vd]

live/lived
save/saved
heave/heaved
slave/slaved

[ɹd]

smooth/smoothed
breathe/breathed
teeth/teethed
soothe/soothed

[zd]

use/used
close/closed
raise/raised
refuse/refused

[md]

seem/seemed
name/named
climb/climbed
bomb/bombed

[nd]

listen/listened
dine/dined
open/opened
sign/signed

[ngd]

bang/banged
hang/hanged
wing/winged
long/longed

They listen to the records.
We raise our children.
They sign the paper.

They listened to the records.
We raised our children.
They signed the paper.

Note

1. Note that Spanish /d/ does not occur in word-final position in Cuban Spanish. This means that your students will tend to 'drop' English /d/ in word-final positions.